

VOLUME 17 | ISSUE 1 | SPRING 2021

EMPLOYER MEETING: GENEIA



MARCH 2, 2021 – EMPLOYER MEETING

On March 2nd, Laura (Syron) Paley, Manager, Client Executive Team, and Mackenzie DeBoer, RN, BSN, MPH, Senior Clinical Transformational Consultant, virtually met with the LVBCH Coalition and employer groups to discuss how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted employers and employees.

Utilization of virtual care vs. in-person clinic visits

Telemedicine use grew exponentially in 2020, especially during the early days of the pandemic. Some [findings](#) from a national sample of 16.7 million individuals with commercial or Medicare Advantage insurance from January 1 to June 16, 2020:

- Rates of telemedicine visits increased from 0.8 to 17.8 visits per 1,000 enrollees.
- In-person visits dropped from 102.7 to 76.3.
- Total visits decreased 103.5 to 94.1.
- Growth in telemedicine use offset roughly two-thirds of the decline in in-person visit volume.
- An [Urban Institute study](#) found 76 percent of adults with deferred or foregone care have one or more chronic conditions.

Impact on medical offices

In December, the nonprofit Physicians Foundation reported:

- 8 percent of physician practices were forced to close.
- 4 percent are expected to shut down in 2021.
- 19 percent of primary care practices surveyed had temporarily closed.
- 98 percent of community health centers made the shift to telemedicine within weeks of COVID-19.

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Deferred care: A growing shadow health crisis related to COVID-19

In March and April 2020, U.S. consumer spending on healthcare dropped year-over-year for the first time in 60 years, according to [Kaiser Family Foundation](#). “The size of the reduction in use of medical care, particularly early in the pandemic, was so great that there’s no way it could not have been harmful.”

- Increased deaths from heart disease
- Delayed/missing cancer screening
- Missing the detection of chronic conditions
- 100,000 excess deaths not attributed to COVID occurred during the pandemic, as of December 2020
- 12 percent more Black and Hispanic individuals died from non-COVID causes in 2020 than in 2019, compared to 4 percent of white people

Statistics on behavioral and mental health in 2020

- 40 percent of U.S. adults reported struggling with mental health or substance use.
- One in six youths experience a mental health disorder each year.
- Half of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14, and 75 percent by age 24.
- Depression alone costs the nation about \$210.5 billion annually.
- The average delay between onset of mental illness symptoms and treatment is 11 years.
- Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among people aged 10-34 in the U.S.
- The most common mental illnesses in the U.S. are anxiety disorders, which affect 40 million adults.

Longer term effects of COVID-19 are beginning to emerge: behavioral health toll of anxiety and depression related to the virus itself, the extended lockdown and ensuing economic turndown. Studies show mental health is worsening among all age groups. Some experts believe COVID-19 could result in a potential 50 percent increase in the prevalence of behavioral health conditions. These statistics reinforce the need for employers to continue to communicate about the different types of covered services for behavioral health through benefit plans and employee assistance programs.