Telehealth — an all-encompassing term referring to use of technology to provide medical care at a distance — can take several forms, including direct care to a patient via audiovisual connection (direct-to-consumer care, telemedicine), in-home monitoring of physiologic and other parameters (remote patient monitoring) or from one health care facility to another (interfacility telehealth).

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth has demonstrated improved access to both cardiac care and other non-cardiac services for congenital heart disease patients and families. This has improved efficiencies in care delivery, enabled advances in patient-centered education and improved both provider and patient satisfaction.

People living with Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) deserve access to coordinated and personalized health care. The integration of digital health into a model that provides continual, integrated care for patients — including both in-person and virtual care as appropriate — is essential.

---

**Ensuring Equitable, High-quality Care and Cost Savings**

**Efficacy and Effectiveness:** the ability of care, at its best, to improve health.

**Opportunities**
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth has prevented interruptions in care after CHD interventions and has allowed ongoing management of chronic conditions.
- Providers now have increased access to patients including those in rural areas.

**Pitfalls**
- Decreased access to care persists for those who do not have internet access or technology available to use telehealth.
- Insurance rules and provider licenses may not allow care to cross state lines.

**Efficiency and Optimality:** the ability to obtain the greatest health improvement at the lowest cost.

**Opportunities**
- Increases flexibility, provider satisfaction.
- Improves access to specialty care.
- Streamlining may reduce costs to state and health care systems.
- Decreases no-show rates.
- Saves travel costs to doctors’ offices.

**Pitfalls**
- Not optimal for all visits, particularly post-operative assessments.
Acceptability: conformity to patient preferences regarding accessibility, the patient-practitioner relation, the amenities, the effects of care, and the cost of care.

Opportunities
- Acceptability to providers improving.
- Increases education for families/patients to highlight the unique contribution of telehealth to continuity and care.
- Enhances future iterations of telehealth to increase patient-centeredness by incorporating patient preferences and values.

Pitfalls
- Patients may assume virtual visits are similar to a phone call, therefore, do not require payment.
- Some data exists that families may prefer pediatric subspecialty visits in person.

Legitimacy and Equity: the ability to access health care regardless of social determinants of health.

Opportunities
- Increases access/ease for those with barriers related to geography, transportation, childcare, and/or dependent care.

Pitfalls
- Access to technology and the internet or technological literacy may widen disparities.
- Patients may not want others seeing their living conditions.

Next Steps and Opportunities to Improve Health Outcomes through Telehealth
- Data collection to enable simultaneous evaluation of health outcomes and economic impact.
- Improve access to care for rural and underserved communities.
- Support/enhance training needs for providers.
- Legislative work to facilitate telehealth for healthcare delivery, even post pandemic.