

New research reveals impact of Covid-19 on attitudes to virtual healthcare

Hospitals face new demand for virtual visiting, and more patients are confident they don't always need to see a doctor in person, as the use of remote technologies rise. But concerns around data security and privacy are voiced, and people with lower incomes are more likely to express anxieties about the virtual shift, new research commissioned by health tech company Visionable has revealed.

Nearly three quarters of patients believe they don't always need to see a doctor in person to receive appropriate care, following the initial spread of coronavirus in the UK, and many more people are urging hospitals to facilitate virtual visiting of friends and loved ones.

These are just two of the findings revealed today in a new report from health tech company Visionable, that shows the impact of Covid-19 on public attitudes to communications technology in healthcare.

The report is based on two rounds of research that each surveyed approximately 1,500 people – one in February 2020, just ahead of the initial escalation of Covid-19 cases in the UK, and a second carried out in May with a near identical demographic sample, in order to measure any shifts in perceptions and experience of communications technology within healthcare following the national lockdown ordered in March.

The report confirms assumptions around increased usage of remote technologies, and also sheds new light around a number of concerns – including women being more likely to be apprehensive about showing body parts, and people with lower incomes being more likely to express concerns around interacting with healthcare professionals virtually.

Highlights from the report include:

- 73% of people questioned in May agreed they did not always need to see a doctor in person to receive appropriate care (compared to 62% in February).
- Three quarters of patients in May said they were happy to use video to engage their GP, compared with 62% previously in February.
- The number of people questioned who had experienced some form of remote consultation (eg phone or video) rose from 51% in February to 63% in May. There was a 50% rise in respondents who had experienced a video consultation (from 8% to 12%). And four in 10 people with chronic conditions had experienced a video consultation, by May. 88% of people with chronic conditions who responded had experienced a remote consultation of some sort by May.
- New demand for virtual visiting of friends and loved ones in hospital emerged. Fewer than three in 10 people questioned in May said they were comfortable physically visiting someone in hospital. 82% of respondents thought it was fairly or extremely important for their hospital to allow video technology to enable virtual visiting.
- More than half – 54% of respondents – said that data security was a potential concern, whilst a very similar amount – 53% – were concerned about making mistakes through technology.
- Showing body parts: 45% of respondents said they were less inclined to show body parts through communications technology than in person.
- Income appeared to affect appetite for virtual technologies and concerns. For example the percentage of people very or fairly happy to have a video consultation with a GP by May was found to be 90% of respondents on higher income (avg £89,000), 75% of those on a mid-income (avg £38,000), and 68% of people on lower income (avg £16,000).

Nina Vinall, Chief Clinical Officer for Visionable, said: “This report has tested the temperature of the public on the use of remote technology in healthcare at a time when that technology has become important in enabling patients access to healthcare professionals.

“It asks some important questions and highlights a number of useful insights into the acceptance of virtual technologies that need to be carefully considered if we are to ensure services remain accessible to patients and equitable for all. This research is not intended as a comprehensive end point in our understanding of patient requirements – it is a starting point that raises ideas and topic areas for ongoing research.”

A full copy of the research whitepaper can be found here: <https://visionable.com/whitepaper/>

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About Visionable

[Visionable](#) is a healthcare technology company that provides a universal video collaboration platform for clinicians to deliver better patient care. Designed by founders who have worked within the NHS and who continue to partner closely with NHS clinicians, the platform has been built specifically to address the advanced technical needs found in healthcare. To achieve a truly ‘connected health’ system, Visionable makes it easy for everyone - from clinicians to whole organisations - to work together, ensuring patients’ access to the timeliest, best care possible.

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