The past year has posed many challenges for patients attempting to navigate their care in a pandemic environment. As our healthcare system became overwhelmed, many healthcare providers turned to telemedicine to better and more safely serve their patients. Most health insurers also adopted to this “new normal” or telehealth.

We at Heart Valve Voice US have never worked harder to make sure our patients are advocated for and supported. While many aspects of everyday life this year have been increasingly difficult, your heart care shouldn’t be. With many heart procedures deemed “elective,” many physicians urged their patients to stay in touch via telehealth. To help patients address this new dynamic, HVVUS began providing information on how to prepare for telehealth appointments and we recently conducted a survey of our community to better understand the patient experience with telehealth.

Our survey showed that nearly half, 47% of our community, had telehealth appointments within the last six months. An encouraging 97% of these patients said they were very or somewhat satisfied with the telehealth experience. Further, 72% said they expect most of their future medical appointments to be via telehealth and 62% felt well-prepared for their appointments.

“While the results of the initial survey are encouraging, our survey also revealed that approximately one-third of heart valve patients are reluctant to engage in telehealth,” said John Lewis, Executive Director of Heart Valve Voice US. “Collectively, we need to do a better job of educating patients and providing resources to them to help make telehealth more attractive, especially for an older population.”

Technology also remains a challenge for patients, with 40% reporting this as the biggest barrier to a successful telehealth appointment. Our community mainly consists of patients 65 or older, and with appointments moving digital they may have not been prepared for the technological shift.

Our survey was conducted to understand whether telehealth provides patients with the level of care they expect and deserve, as well as furnish insight into how HVVUS may assist our community in the future. We asked Susan Strong, our Director of Patient Engagement, how telehealth appointments with her cardiologist have gone since the start of the pandemic: “Since the pandemic began last year, I've utilized telehealth appointments with several providers. Telehealth will never take the place of an in-person meeting where my cardiologist can listen directly to my heart, but under the current circumstances, a telehealth appointment allowed me to follow up with my cardiologist while staying safe at home.” Susan adds that “multiple health conditions place me at higher risk for serious complications from COVID-19. Through telehealth, my cardiologist was able to determine that we can safely hold off on my routine echocardiogram. Telehealth keeps patients safe and provides peace of mind. I'm a big fan!”

Stay tuned to Heart Valve Voice US and the MyValveMyVoice community for additional tips on how to make telehealth appointments more productive. Thank you for your participation!



