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Welcome to Today's Webinar!

- Housekeeping reminders:
  - All audience lines will be muted
  - Please turn off your camera
  - To maintain focus on our panelists, **please do not post comments or questions in the chat**
    - » Questions for the Panelists can be submitted via private message to Becky Payne
    - » Technical questions can be submitted via private chat to NQF Staff

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https://www.qualityforum.org

A Conversation with the Action Team on Virtual Healthcare Quality

Capstone Webinar

January 26, 2022

NQF gratefully acknowledges support from the following organizations towards the Action Team on Virtual Healthcare Quality: Nursing Alliance for Quality Care, Silver Sponsor; Compassus, General Sponsor

Welcome

National Quality Forum Welcome

Dana Gelb Safran, ScD

President & CEO, National Quality Forum

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NQF's Mission, Vision, and Values

MISSION
To be the trusted voice driving measurable health improvements

VISION
Every person experiences high value care and optimal health outcomes

VALUES
Collaboration | Leadership | Passion | Excellence | Integrity

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Action Team on Virtual Healthcare Quality

- The Action Team on Virtual Healthcare Quality launched in May 2021 and met through December 2021
- The Action Team included 30 diverse member organizations representing perspectives across the healthcare spectrum

Action Team Goal: Identify actionable recommendations to ensure the quality of virtual healthcare

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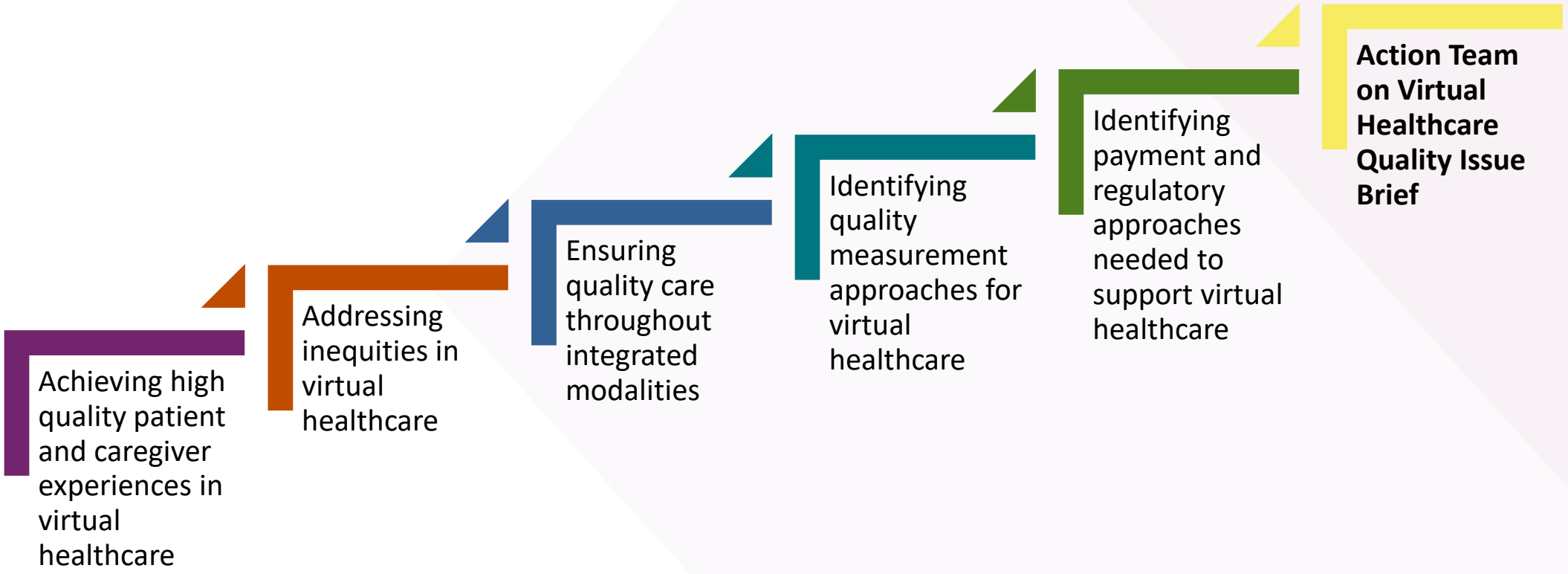
Action Team Participants

Co-Chairs: **Cleveland Clinic** *and* **New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute**

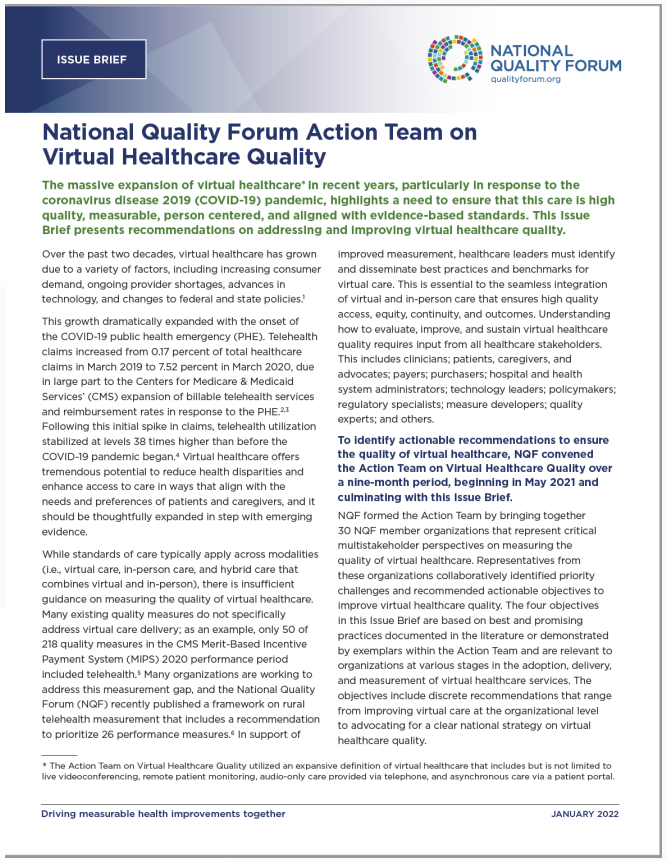
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
- American College of Cardiology
- American Geriatrics Society
- American Heart Association
- American Occupational Therapy Association
- American Psychiatric Nurses Association
- AmeriHealth Caritas
- City of Hope
- Consumers Advancing Patient Safety
- CVS-Aetna
- Dialysis Patient Citizens
- General Dynamics Information Technology
- Hazel Health
- Health Resources & Services Administration
- Hospital for Special Surgery
- Intermountain Healthcare
- Mayo Clinic
- Merck & Co., Inc.
- National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
- National Committee for Quality Assurance
- National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
- National Rural Health Association
- Nursing Alliance for Quality Care
- Purposeful Concepts LLC
- Teladoc Health, Inc.
- The Joint Commission
- VA Office of Connected Care
- Virginia Mason Medical Center

Action Team Accomplishments

Identifying Barriers and Sharing Best Practices



Action Team on Virtual Healthcare Quality
Issue Brief



ISSUE BRIEF

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National Quality Forum Action Team on Virtual Healthcare Quality

The massive expansion of virtual healthcare* in recent years, particularly in response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, highlights a need to ensure that this care is high quality, measurable, person centered, and aligned with evidence-based standards. This Issue Brief presents recommendations on addressing and improving virtual healthcare quality.

Over the past two decades, virtual healthcare has grown due to a variety of factors, including increasing consumer demand, ongoing provider shortages, advances in technology, and changes to federal and state policies.[1]

This growth dramatically expanded with the onset of the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE). Telehealth claims increased from 0.17 percent of total healthcare claims in March 2019 to 7.52 percent in March 2020, due in large part to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' (CMS) expansion of billable telehealth services and reimbursement rates in response to the PHE.[2,3] Following this initial spike in claims, telehealth utilization stabilized at levels 38 times higher than before the COVID-19 pandemic began.[4] Virtual healthcare offers tremendous potential to reduce health disparities and enhance access to care in ways that align with the needs and preferences of patients and caregivers, and it should be thoughtfully expanded in step with emerging evidence.

While standards of care typically apply across modalities (i.e., virtual care, in-person care, and hybrid care that combines virtual and in-person), there is insufficient guidance on measuring the quality of virtual healthcare. Many existing quality measures do not specifically address virtual care delivery; as an example, only 50 of 218 quality measures in the CMS Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) 2020 performance period included telehealth.[5] Many organizations are working to address this measurement gap, and the National Quality Forum (NQF) recently published a framework on rural telehealth measurement that includes a recommendation to prioritize 26 performance measures.[6] In support of improved measurement, healthcare leaders must identify and disseminate best practices and benchmarks for virtual care. This is essential to the seamless integration of virtual and in-person care that ensures high quality access, equity, continuity, and outcomes. Understanding how to evaluate, improve, and sustain virtual healthcare quality requires input from all healthcare stakeholders. This includes clinicians; patients, caregivers, and advocates; payers; purchasers; hospital and health system administrators; technology leaders; policymakers; regulatory specialists; measure developers; quality experts; and others.

To identify actionable recommendations to ensure the quality of virtual healthcare, NQF convened the Action Team on Virtual Healthcare Quality over a nine-month period, beginning in May 2021 and culminating with this Issue Brief.

NQF formed the Action Team by bringing together 30 NQF member organizations that represent critical multistakeholder perspectives on measuring the quality of virtual healthcare. Representatives from these organizations collaboratively identified priority challenges and recommended actionable objectives to improve virtual healthcare quality. The four objectives in this Issue Brief are based on best and promising practices documented in the literature or demonstrated by exemplars within the Action Team and are relevant to organizations at various stages in the adoption, delivery, and measurement of virtual healthcare services. The objectives include discrete recommendations that range from improving virtual care at the organizational level to advocating for a clear national strategy on virtual healthcare quality.

* The Action Team on Virtual Healthcare Quality utilized an expansive definition of virtual healthcare that includes but is not limited to live videoconferencing, remote patient monitoring, audio-only care provided via telephone, and asynchronous care via a patient portal.

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Issue Brief
Key Challenges

1. **A lack of best practices, benchmarks, and measurement guidance** impedes the delivery and objective assessment of high quality healthcare across modalities of care.
2. **An unclear national strategy on reimbursement for virtual healthcare** creates uncertainty for healthcare organizations and disincentivizes investment in delivering high quality virtual care.
3. **The digital divide exacerbates inequities in virtual healthcare** (e.g., broadband, hardware) and prevents the most vulnerable patients from utilizing the modality of care that they need or prefer.
4. **Inadequate interoperability** across disparate health information technology (IT) systems exacerbates challenges with communication and continuity of care across modalities.
5. **Inconsistent training and support for clinicians, staff, patients, and caregivers** diminishes the virtual healthcare experience for everyone involved.

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Issue Brief
Recommendations

To support virtual healthcare quality, the Action Team recommends that healthcare stakeholders partner together to accomplish the following objectives:

Action Team Panel Discussion

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Action Team Panel
Moderated Discussion

Leonie Heyworth

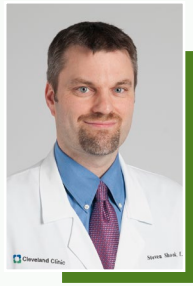
Deputy Director for Clinical Services, Telehealth Services, VA Office of Connected Care

Diann Folkersen

Patient Advocate, Consumers Advancing Patient Safety

Heather Black

Healthcare Quality Research Director, Merck & Co., Inc.



Co-Moderated by Steven Shook

Lead for Virtual Health, Cleveland Clinic; Action Team Co-Chair

Co-Moderated by Linda Schwimmer

CEO, New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute; Action Team Co-Chair

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Action Team Panel
Audience Q&A

Please send your questions for the Panel privately to Becky Payne (NQF)

Leonie Heyworth

Deputy Director for Clinical Services, Telehealth Services, VA Office of Connected Care

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Heather Black

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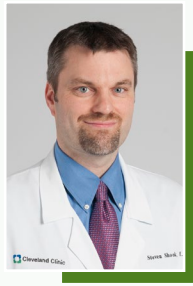

Co-Moderated by Steven Shook

Lead for Virtual Health, Cleveland Clinic; Action Team Co-Chair

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CEO, New Jersey Health Care Quality Institute; Action Team Co-Chair

Next Steps and Closing Remarks

Action Team on Virtual Healthcare Quality Issue Brief Now Available

- Download and share the Action Team on Virtual Healthcare Quality Issue Brief on the NQF Website.

ISSUE BRIEF

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2 DEVELOP A NATIONAL STRATEGY ON VIRTUAL HEALTHCARE USE AND REIMBURSEMENT

- Utilize the growing body of evidence to maintain and thoughtfully expand public and private reimbursement for virtual healthcare beyond the COVID-19 pandemic
- Engage in advocacy efforts that highlight key benefits, opportunities, and needs of virtual services
- Standardize unique codes to allow stratification by virtual and in-person care
- Define benchmarks, goals, and accountability programs for virtual healthcare that are based on established standards of care
- Develop standardized criteria to help determine which patients or clinical use cases will benefit most from virtual care
- Broaden regulations to increase access to and reimbursement of virtual healthcare across state lines
- Detect and prevent fraud, waste, and abuse (FWA) related to virtual healthcare, and use accurate FWA data to inform telehealth policy

3 SEAMLESSLY AND SECURELY SHARE VIRTUAL HEALTHCARE INFORMATION ACROSS CARE TEAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Create organizational policies and workflows to ensure information from virtual visits is communicated in a timely manner to all care team members
- Standardize roles and responsibilities to support virtual workflows, and empower staff and providers to focus on key tasks
- Ensure patients and caregivers have access to information from virtual visits (e.g., instructions, educational materials, and follow-up information)
- Encourage virtual healthcare technology companies to standardize their platforms in ways that streamline secure data sharing across disparate health IT systems
- Utilize care navigators to help guide patients through care, including care across modalities
- Provide ongoing training for clinicians and staff on delivering high quality, person-centered, virtual care that is coordinated across the care team

4 EXPAND ACCESS TO CARE AND PROMOTE HEALTH EQUITY

- Implement virtual healthcare hubs in schools, libraries, retail stores, and other locations that are accessible to

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- Provide educational materials and trainings to patients, families, and caregivers in advance of virtual health appointments to optimize users' comfort and engagement
- Perform risk adjustment and stratification of data by social factors to ensure care is equitable
- Prioritize virtual healthcare platforms that include solutions for language services, disability accommodations, family or caregiver involvement, and other elements of patient-centered care

and their representatives who participated in the 2021

Health Resources & Services Administration
Colleen Morris

Hospital for Special Surgery
Elizabeth Biehl

Intermountain Healthcare
Todd J. Vento

Mayo Clinic
Kannan Ramar

Merck & Co., Inc.
Heather Black

National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
Shelley Fuld Nasso

National Committee for Quality Assurance
Eric Musser

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
Lori Bishop

National Rural Health Association
Joanie Perkins

Nursing Alliance for Quality Care
Eileen Esposito

Purposeful Concepts LLC
Barbara Lake

Teladoc Health, Inc.
Bridget McCabe

The Joint Commission
Christina Cordero

VA Office of Connected Care
Leonie Heyworth

Virginia Mason Medical Center
Dana Kahn

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THANK YOU.

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