

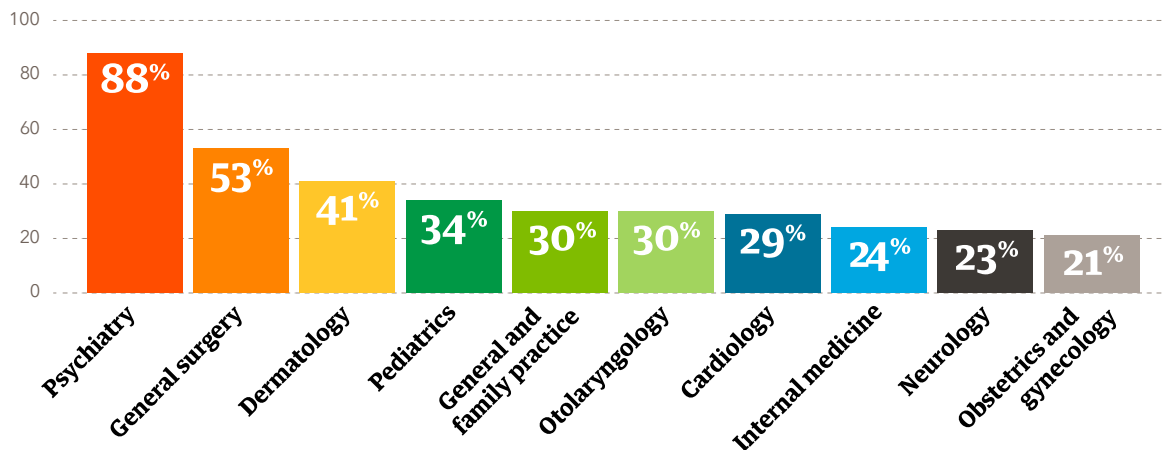
Telehealth strategies: Physician models for virtual care.

Physician interest in working in telehealth is strong – from young, tech-savvy physicians to those nearing retirement who want a more flexible alternative. However, staffing virtual care programs can be challenging. Healthcare organizations should consider the following factors when integrating physicians into virtual care.

The specialties best suited for telehealth

Although telehealth is more widely used now than before the COVID-19 pandemic, most health systems are still working through the best use cases for virtual care, especially in specialty medicine.

Estimated percent of patient visits that could be performed virtually in key specialties¹



Challenges in integrating physicians into virtual care

Integrating physicians into a virtual care model remains a challenge for most health systems. Obstacles include:

- In-house physicians are already working at full capacity and can't stretch to add virtual hours
- Current demand for telehealth doesn't justify adding full-time physicians
- Fragmented telehealth technology solutions make building a holistic model difficult
- Third-party telehealth provider pools create issues with quality and consistency

1. Analysis of site-of-care shifts. Advisory Board, 2021. <https://www.advisory.com/featured/site-of-care-shifts>



Solutions for virtual physician care

Health systems are tackling these staffing challenges in a variety of ways:

- Contracting with local specialty medical groups for a portion of their time
- Creating shared physician resource models with other health systems, especially for high-demand specialties
- Building in-house telehealth provider pools

These solutions can be challenging for health systems that are used to owning the entire physician, but many organizations are becoming more open to their specialists holding privileges at multiple facilities.

Staffing telehealth with locums

Locum tenens physicians can be an effective solution to the virtual care staffing challenge under the following circumstances:

- When an organization only needs a part-time telehealth resource
- When an organization does not want to share physician resources with other organizations
- When the health system's physicians are stretched too thin to effectively staff a virtual care program without increased risk of burnout
- When activating a new line of business with a virtual or hybrid component, which allows the organization to start quickly without the risk of hiring a full-time physician

Some virtual care situations aren't the best fit for locums. When the virtual patient volume is very low, for example, it may not make sense to staff it with either a permanent employee or a locums physician. In those cases, the best, most affordable solution may be to tap into a shared service.

**CHG Healthcare can help you staff your telehealth program with locum tenens providers.
Give us a call at [866.588.5996](tel:866.588.5996) or email ecs.contact@chghealthcare.com.**