State of the Telehealth Union

Angad Singh, MD

Chief Medical Information Officer
Tribal Health Connections

Associate Chief Medical Information Officer
Clinical Assistant Professor
University of Washington

Disclosures

None

What *is* telehealth?

Video calls, obviously...

...right?

Ha! Not just!

Video calls, yes, but also...

- Phone calls in between appointments

- Secure messages through patient portals

- Text messaging

- Asynchronous communication, such as sharing files, images, documents, test results, or symptom diaries

- Patient-to-provider or provider-to-provider video chats from smaller, local clinics or community centers

Source: https://telehealth.hhs.gov/providers/best-practice-guides/telehealth-for-rural-areas/access-to-internet-and-other-telehealth-resources

Common telehealth/video vendors

The list of vendors has grown, but most common ones remain the same since 2020

Zoom for Healthcare

Webex for Healthcare

Microsoft Teams (using Virtual
Appointments app)

Doximity

doxy.me

Vsee

Vidyo

Telehealth platform requirements

May 11, 2023 11:59pm:

COVID-19 Public Health Emergency ended

As of August 9, 2023:

Full enforcement began of HIPAA rules requiring telehealth services to be performed in a "private and secure manner"

Source: https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/special-topics/telehealth/index.html

Indian Health Services

- Federal regulations require any telehealth platform to follow FedRAMP security requirements

- Primary vendor has been Webex for Healthcare

- As of October 2022, IHS is also now offering RingMD as another telehealth option

HIPAA – does it apply?

- Generally speaking, yes

- HIPAA applies to tribes if they bill or perform related standard transactions electronically, such as submitting a claim for payment

- Unless...they are a hybrid legal entity where formal policies are created to carveout non-covered activities (e.g. core public health activities) from HIPAA requirements

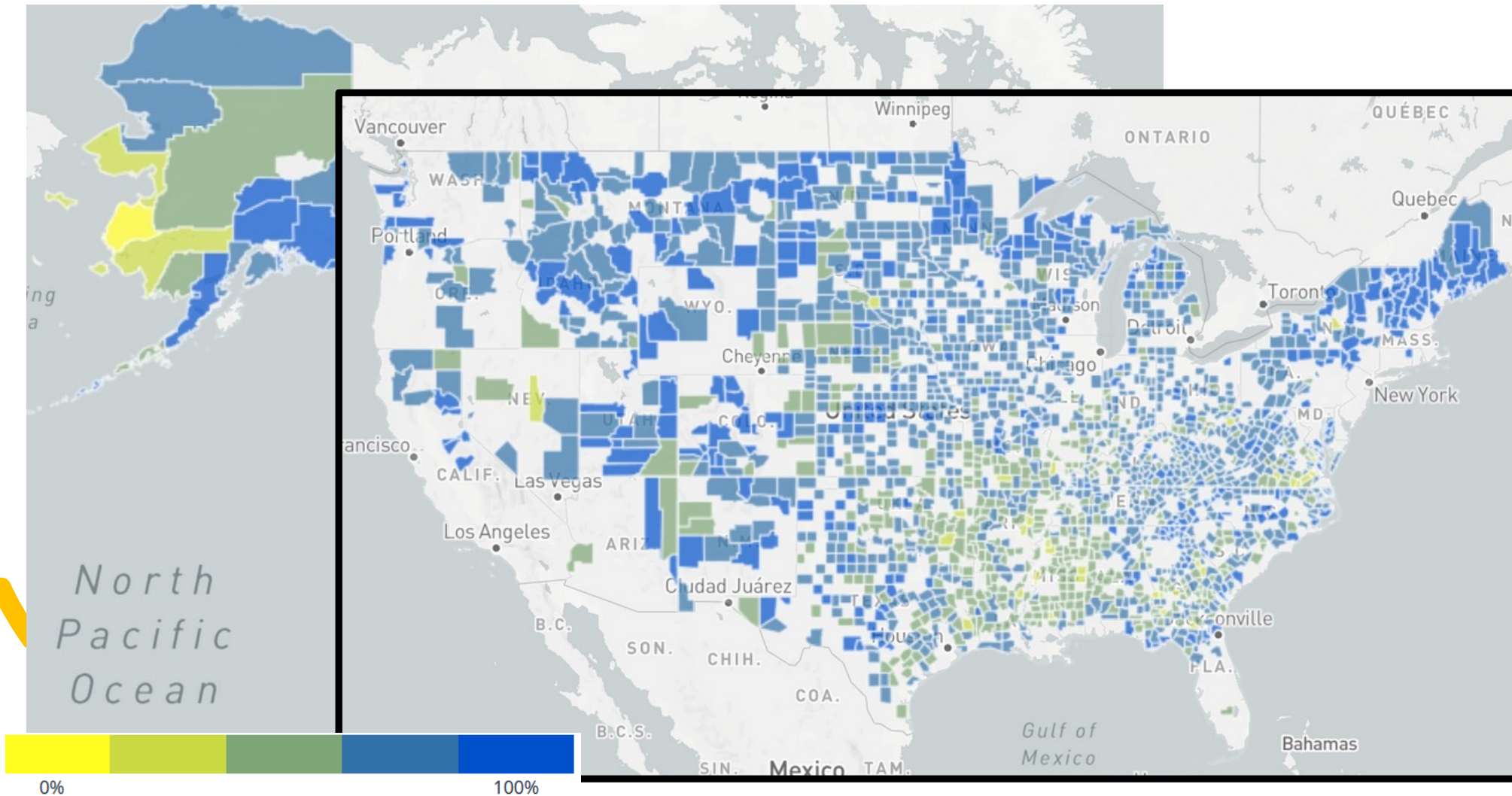Source: https://www.networkforphl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Tribal-HIPAA-Hybrid-Entity-FAQs-3-9-2020.pdf

Broadband Access as a "Super-Determinant" of Health

July 12, 2018

Advancing Broadband Connectivity as a Social Determinant of Health

Fixed Internet Broadband Adoption (Rural)

0%   100%

Source: https://www.fcc.gov/health/maps

Broadband in Tribal Communities (as of 2019)

Broadband

- 99% of housing units in U.S. urban areas have broadband access
- Only 65% on rural American Indian/Alaskan Native lands have access

Cell service

- 99.9% of the U.S. population lived in areas with LTE coverage
- 97.5% of individuals in American Indian/Alaskan Native with LTE
  - Note: Hotspots use cell service to create wifi networks

Broadband in Tribal Communities

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program

- Established in 2021 following the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (aka Bipartisan Infrastructure Law)

- $65 billion allotted to improving broadband access across the US

- ~$3 billion grant funding specifically for tribal communities as part of Internet for All Initiative

- So far, 28 grants have been awarded totaling $1.86 billion to 226 Tribal entities as part of the TBCP (as of Sept 2023)

Broadband in Tribal Communities

HEADS UP

- [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) available for an additional $970 million in funding a part of the TBCP program.

- Application due date: 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on January 23, 2024.

Broadband in Tribal Communities

Grants can support:

(A) Broadband infrastructure deployment projects, including support for the establishment of carrier-neutral submarine cable landing stations; and

(B) Affordable broadband programs, including—

(i) Providing free or reduced-cost broadband service and preventing disconnection of existing broadband service;

(ii) preventing disconnection of existing broadband service;

(C) distance learning;

(D) telehealth;

(E) digital inclusion efforts (including digital equity planning and workforce development activities); and

(F) broadband adoption activities.

Source: https://www.ntia.gov/sites/default/files/2023-07/ntia-tbcp-round2-nofo.pdf

Broadband in Tribal Communities

- The federal Affordable Connectivity Program can help patients get internet service and even a discount on electronics that can be used for telehealth

- Program benefits include:
  - A discount toward internet service of up to $30 per month (up to $75 per month for households on qualifying tribal lands)
  - A one-time discount of up to $100 toward a laptop, desktop, or tablet

Source: https://www.fcc.gov/acp

Broadband-enabled community centers

Source: https://www.wbur.org/npr/1199885888/primary-care-rural-alabama-telehealth
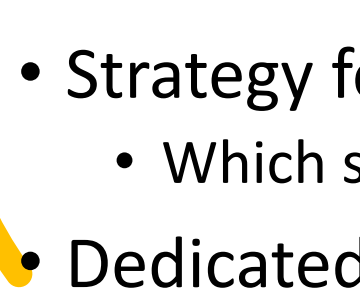
Looking ahead

Strategy considerations - all about the people

- In-house telehealth vs contracted out?

- For in-house:
  - Telehealth in blocks?
  - Appointments woven into schedule?

- For contracted out:
  - What services to solve which problems?

- Strategy for saving space
  - Which services can be delivered most effectively over telehealth?

- Dedicated virtual service line

Home technologies – time to explore…

- Continuous glucose monitoring

- Connected home blood pressure machines

- Sleep apnea machine integration

The role of AI

- "To be determined"
- Chatbots for real-time patient engagement
- Patient Messaging
  - Drafted replies
  - Translations (language & literacy level)
- Home monitoring (sensors)
- Predicting (negative) health outcomes (e.g. fall risk, hospitalization)

The present/future of (tele)behavioral health

Telehealth Has Played an Outsized Role Meeting Mental Health Needs During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Justin Lo, **Matthew Rae**, **Krutika Amin**, **Cynthia Cox**, **Nirmita Panchal**, and Benjamin F. Miller

Published: Mar 15, 2022

Hot off the presses

IHS Selects New Enterprise Electronic Health Record System

The U.S Department of Health and Human Services, through the Indian Health Service, has selected General Dynamics Information Technology, Inc. to build, configure, and maintain a new IHS enterprise Electronic Health Record system utilizing Oracle Cerner technology. The new EHR will replace the Resource and Patient Management System, a 40-year-old system that handles everything from patient registration to insurance billing. This updated system modernizes IHS' health care delivery and operations, making it easier for patients and providers to access updated and accurate information when they need it. This work supports the Biden-

QUESTIONS?

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angads@tribalhealthconnections.com