To address gaps in technology adoption that impact underserved communities, the National Center for Primary Care (NCPC) at Morehouse School of Medicine is examining the adoption and use of digital health tools by primary care clinicians in four southeastern states: Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

Digital health tools (DHT) include:
- telemedicine
- home/remote monitoring
- health information exchange
- prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP)
- electronic health records
- wearable devices
- mobile applications, and other technologies used in healthcare settings

Kentucky Demographics

Total Population: 4.5 million+

2% Asian | 9% Black | 2% Other | 88% White

Hispanic Ethnicity | Live in Rural Area

4% | 41%

More than 180 clinicians in Kentucky have completed the survey, highlighting the challenges and opportunities they have experienced using digital health tools.

Social Determinants of Health in Kentucky

- 16% Living in Poverty
- 102 Medically Underserved Areas
- 6% Living without Health Insurance
- 0 Living within the Medicaid Coverage Gap
- 7% Households without a car
- 93 Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas

This project was funded in partnership with the United Health Foundation, grant number 6479.
Survey Participants Demographics

The majority of the 181 clinicians from Kentucky who participated in the survey held MD or DO credentials, specialized in primary care, and practiced in urban areas. They reported being satisfied with existing DHT.

**Credentials**
- PhD: 4%
- NP/PA/CNM: 29%
- Other: 12%
- MD/DO: 55%

**Specialties**
- Primary Care (FM, IM, GER, PEDS): 67%
- Mental/Behavioral Health: 9%
- Obstetrics and Gynecology: 12%
- Other: 12%

**Medicaid Participation**
- Overall Study: 89% Accept Medicaid, 91% Participate in Medicaid EHR
- Kentucky: 35% Accept Medicaid, 41% Participate in Medicaid EHR

**Technology Enthusiasm**
- Eager or Early Adopters: 52% Overall Study, 50% Kentucky
- Neutral: 31% Overall Study, 32% Kentucky
- Skeptical or Hesitant: 17% Overall Study, 18% Kentucky

**Reported Levels of Satisfaction**
- Satisfied or Very Satisfied with telemedicine experience: 72%
- Satisfied or Very Satisfied with electronic health record experience: 69%
Nearly 99% of all providers who participated in the survey use digital health tools. Kentucky providers reported similar usage rates.

More than 7 in 10 providers reported being connected to the Health Information Exchange (HIE), but less than half reported using it.

90% of all survey participants reported using DHT because of COVID-19.

90% of survey participants in Kentucky reported using DHT because of COVID-19.

54% of respondents who used telehealth because of COVID-19 reported it was their first time.

47% of respondents who used telehealth because of COVID-19 reported it was their first time.

Reasons for Using Digital Health Tools during COVID-19:
- 66.8% Treatment of COVID-19 positive patients
- 62.8% Treatment of COVID-19 negative patients
- 10.4% Other
- 39.2% Training
- 41.2% Other
- 31.4% Other
- 46.4% Other

This project was funded in partnership with the United Health Foundation, grant number 6479.
Factors that Support and Impede Digital Health Tool Adoption

Traditionally, if [telehealth] is done well, families feel like if I call, they will help me and not if I call, I will be put on hold for two hours and be given an appointment in two weeks. So, it’s not so much the technology, but what’s happening when that phone is picked up, that’s important as well... -Focus Group Participant

“Telehealth is something that can’t just be for everybody, it has to be shaped and formed for different people individually, as well as culturally.” -Focus Group Participant

Top Barriers to Adopting Digital Health Tools

- Time: 53%
- Cost: 46%
- Limited Workflow Integration: 39%

Top Factors Supporting Digital Health Tool Adoption

- Ease of Workflow Integration: 59%
- Meets Patient Need: 59%
- Improves Patient Health: 55%

Reasons for Adopting Digital Health Tools

- Mandated: 66.2%
- Voluntary: 52.9%

Federal or State Law: 50.3%
Practice Leadership: 47.8%
Practice Decision: 50.3%
Individual Decision: 47.8%

Federal or State Incentive Payments: 39.8%
Reimbursement by Public Payers: 33.7%
Reimbursement by Private Payers: 24.9%

Reasons for Digital Health Tool Use after COVID-19

- Reducing barriers to access to care
- Providing access to substance use and mental health therapy
- Continuity of care for patients with or without COVID-19

It’s really not always the technology, it’s who’s on the receiving end, how well that relationship is, how well it works, and what families get. -Focus Group Participant

This project was funded in partnership with the United Health Foundation, grant number 6479.