Leveraging Digital Health Tools to Advance Health Equity

GEORGIA

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
- patient portal
- health information exchange
- electronic health records
- prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP)
- wearable devices
- mobile applications, and other technologies used in healthcare settings

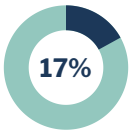
Georgia Demographics

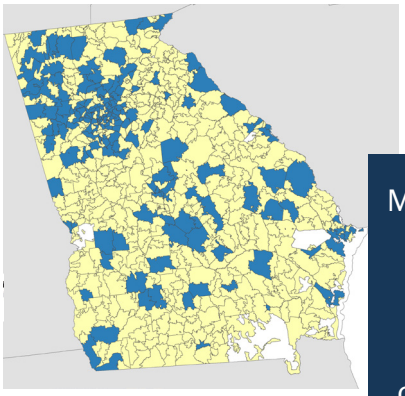
Total Population: 10.5 million+

4% Asian | 33% Black | 3% Other | 60% White

Hispanic Ethnicity

Live in Rural Area



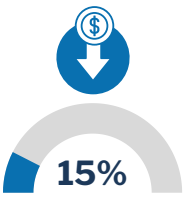


Number of Survey Participants in Georgia ZIP Codes

0 >=1

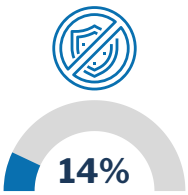
More than 400 clinicians in Georgia have completed the survey, highlighting the challenges and opportunities they have experienced using digital health tools.

Social Determinants of Health in Georgia



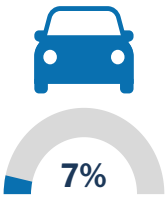
15% Living in Poverty

141 Medically Underserved Areas



14% Living without Health Insurance

267,000 Living within the Medicaid Coverage Gap



7% Households without a car

138 Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas

www.msm.edu/ncpc | @NCPC_Policy

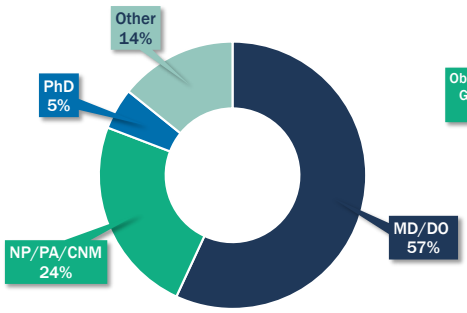
This project was funded in partnership with the United Health Foundation, grant number 6479.

NCPC
National Center for Primary Care

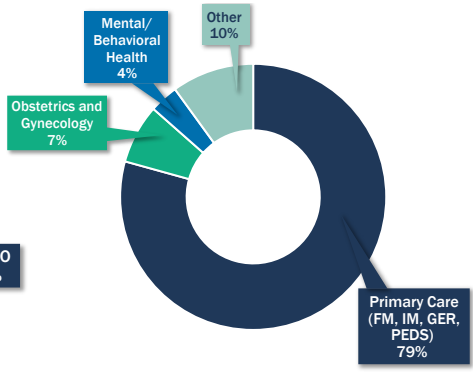
Survey Participants Demographics

The majority of the 400 clinicians from Georgia 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.

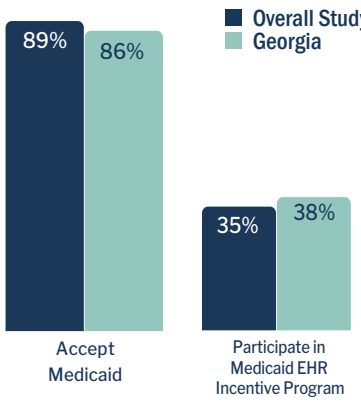
Credentials



Specialties



Medicaid Participation



9%
Solo Practice

9.7%
Small Practice

30.4%
Large Practice

30.7%
Hospital/Hospital and Outpatient Primary Care

30.4%
Community Health Center

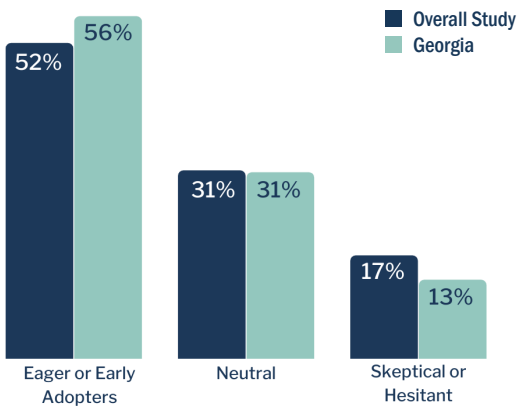
89.6%
of all survey participants practice in urban areas

9%
practice in rural areas

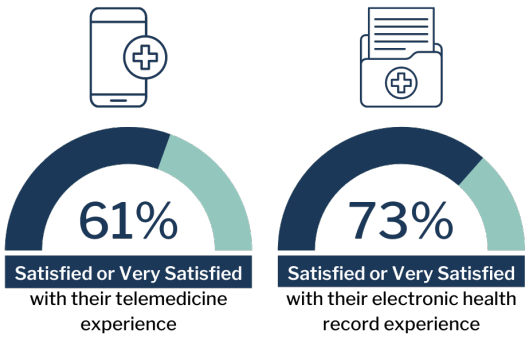
90.5%
of survey participants in Georgia practice in urban areas

8.2%
practice in rural areas

Technology Enthusiasm



Reported Levels of Satisfaction



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Current Digital Health Tool Use

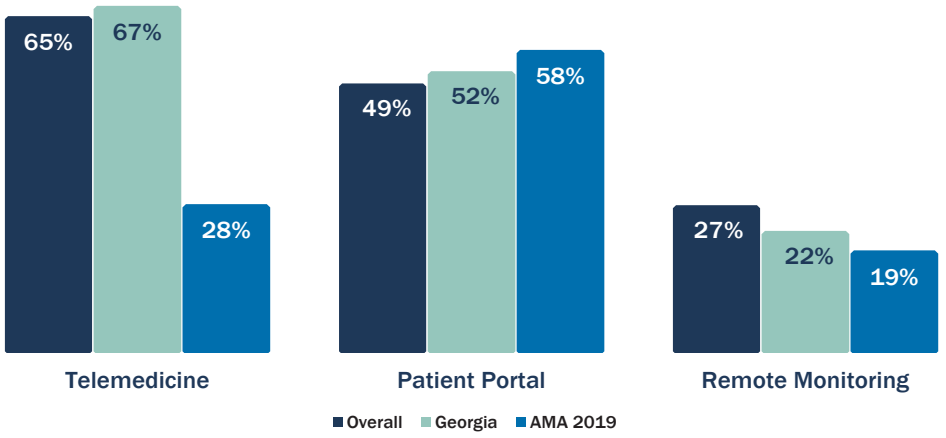
70.8% of respondents were connected to the State HIE

39.9% of respondents were using the State HIE

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

Reported Digital Health Tool Use

Nearly 99% of all providers who participated in the survey use digital health tools. Georgia providers reported similar usage rates.



Digital Health Tool Use and COVID-19

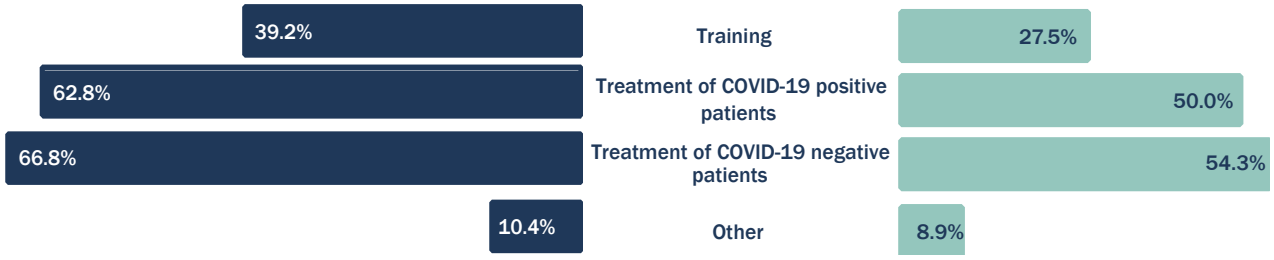
90% of all survey participants reported using DHT because of COVID-19

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

89.6% of survey participants in Georgia reported using DHT because of COVID-19

55% of respondents who used telehealth because of COVID-19 reported it was their first time

Reasons for Using Digital Health Tools during COVID-19



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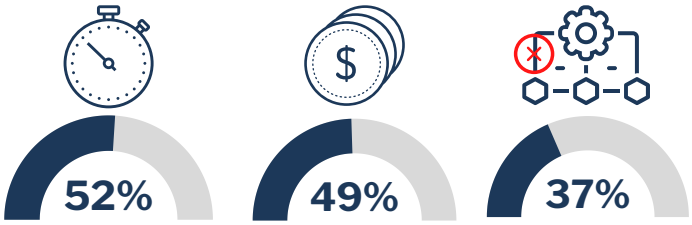
Factors that Support and Impede Digital Health Tool Adoption

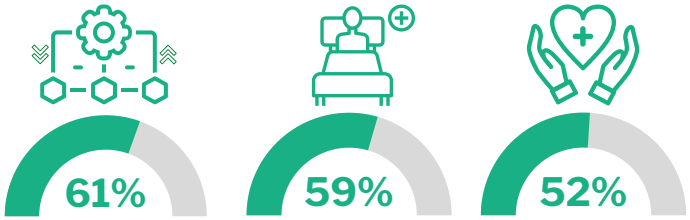
> Why should I cater to the EHR? The EHR should cater to me.
>
> -Focus Group Participant

> When asked what would you tell leaders and decision-makers to help better serve patients: "A [national] health information exchange or EMR that you can access everybody's information no matter where they went and ideally would include social services as well. Maybe even the jail, like truly everything.
>
> -Focus Group Participant

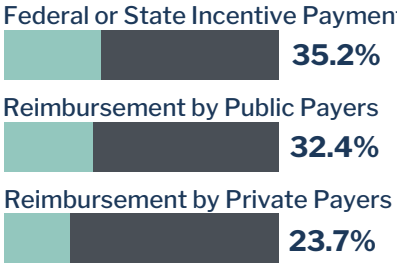
Top Barriers to Adopting Digital Health Tools



Top Factors Supporting Digital Health Tool Adoption

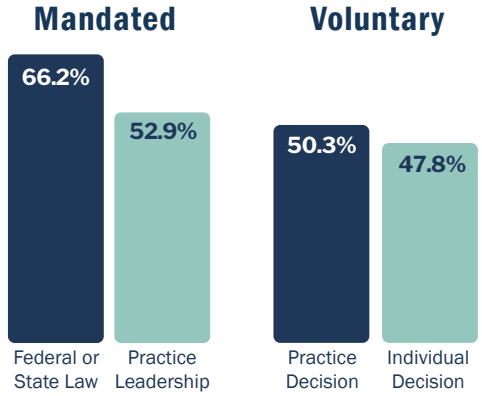


Reimbursement as a Support for Digital Health Tool Adoption



> ...at our center, a lot of our front desk people are assuming that our older clientele were not tech-savvy. They weren't even saying, "Give me your email address, let me sign you up for the portal." I said, "No. If you ask them, most of them have [an email address]." My dad's 80 and he's like, "I want a new Apple Watch, my email is whatever." Now, he does break down and wait for my children to come because he locked himself out. But they are on and using it.
>
> -Focus Group Participant

Reasons for Adopting Digital Health Tools



Reasons for Digital Health Tool Use after COVID-19

Triage
patients before visit to emergency department (for COVID and non-COVID related symptoms)

Assessment
of COVID-19 symptoms prior to referral to specialists and hospitals

Chronic Care
management

Continued Access
to care for rural and underserved communities

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