As the use of digital communication tools expands sharply, there is a growing sense that telehealth can help people better manage their health and improve access to care. Telehealth could be especially valuable in areas where health professionals and facilities are sparse, potentially leading to improved outcomes for many people.

Yet, while there is growing evidence that telehealth can be effective in some circumstances, there are still considerable questions about how well it might work for different populations and under various conditions.

Through its funding of studies on telehealth strategies and applications, PCORI is providing evidence to answer these questions.

### Research Addressing Questions That Matter

PCORI funds comparative clinical effectiveness research (CER) to determine which healthcare options work best for which patients, based on their needs and preferences. CER produces evidence that helps people make better-informed healthcare choices.

**PATIENT**

I have a history of drug abuse and am currently in treatment. I’ve also been diagnosed with Hepatitis C (HCV). I would like to remain in a treatment facility, but still receive care for my HCV. How effective are telehealth programs for HCV?

**CLINICIAN**

I have several patients with hypertension. Has telehealth been shown to be effective in helping patients reduce their risk of stroke and other risks of hypertension?

### STUDY SPOTLIGHTS

#### Increasing Access to Specialty Care for Those With Chronic Skin Disease

Many patients with chronic skin diseases—especially those living in low-income or remote areas where healthcare facilities and providers are scarce—have difficulty maintaining regular care for their skin problems. Using a telehealth application developed by the research team, patients and their primary care physicians can upload images of skin lesions, describe conditions, and consult with a dermatologist. This study is assessing whether patients with access to this online specialty care do better than patients who are directed to seek in-person care from a primary care doctor or a dermatologist. Further details are at [www.pcori.org/Armstrong031](http://www.pcori.org/Armstrong031).

#### Improving Children’s Access to Mental Health Care

This study compares two approaches to enrolling children from low income, urban communities into mental health care services. In the traditional approach, mental health clinics contact families by telephone with no other support. In a new approach, a care coordinator guides a videoconference involving family members, primary care physicians, and mental health providers. The study aims to determine which approach best improves children’s quality of life while also providing timely, accessible care that parents are comfortable with and understand. More information is available at [www.pcori.org/Coker044](http://www.pcori.org/Coker044).
As of July 2018, PCORI has awarded $258 MILLION TO FUND 70 comparative clinical effectiveness research studies related to telehealth.

### BY THE NUMBER OF PROJECTS

**Populations in Telehealth***

- Racial/Ethnic Minorities: 54
- Low Socioeconomic Status: 28
- Women: 20
- Older Adults: 16
- Children: 15
- Low Health Literacy: 13
- Rural: 13
- Individuals with Multiple Chronic Conditions: 11

**Primary Condition Categories***

- Nutritional and Metabolic Disorders: 10
- Cardiovascular Diseases: 10
- Mental/Behavioral Health: 10
- Neurological Disorders: 6
- Rare Diseases: 5
- Cancer: 5
- Kidney Disease: 5
- Respiratory Disorders: 3

**Purpose of Intervention***

- Promote Self-Management: 11
- Improve Access to Specialty Care: 40
- Remote Monitoring: 40
- Education: 26

*A project may be counted across more than one category*