

Do social determinants of health affect the use of virtual chronic care solutions?



There is a commonly-held belief that socioeconomic factors, like income and education level—which are considered key Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)—may negatively impact the utilization of digital health programs and that this could widen gaps in health equity.

STUDY SIZE AND SCOPE:

Individuals aged 18-89 with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes and enrolled in Teladoc Health Diabetes Management program for 12-18 months

- 1,308 respondents
- Mean age: 51
- 54% Female
- 13% Black
- 5% Asian
- 12% Hispanic
- 84% with type 2 diabetes

Summary Findings

Our recent peer-reviewed study of people with diabetes suggests, however, that when these programs are designed with considerations of a individual's health literacy levels, the barriers to care they may be facing, and an understanding of their individualized coaching needs, SDOHs do not appear to hinder high program engagement—which can lead to improved health and blood glucose measures.

Challenge

Diabetes is one of the most common chronic conditions in the United States affecting around 37 million Americans.¹ For years, digital self-management solutions have improved health outcomes for many populations—however, understanding how SDOHs affect the way people engage with and benefit from these programs is key to ensuring equitable access to quality care.



LEVERAGING REMOTE MONITORING DEVICES CAN IMPROVE HEALTH EQUITY BY:

1. Expanding access to real-time symptom management support
2. Reducing unnecessary healthcare utilization
3. Improving health outcomes

METHODOLOGY

The study, which was presented at the American Diabetes Association's 82nd Scientific Session in June 2022, examines the extent to which members' income level, education level and area deprivation index² affected use of the Teladoc Health Diabetes Management program.³

- Participants completed an electronic study survey within 6 weeks of study initiation
- Data from the program were used to calculate outcomes of **program utilization** and **glycemic control**⁴ within 90 days of survey⁵

Diabetes Management: An inclusive solution for improved outcomes

The Teladoc Health Diabetes Management program empowers members to better understand their blood sugar, develop healthy lifestyle habits and improve glycemic control. To address health literacy barriers, our engagement communications are written at or below the 6th grade reading level (4th grade reading level for Medicare and Medicaid audiences), and bilingual communications materials are available upon request. The program also provides access to health coaches trained according to the National Board of Health and Wellness Coaching practice standards, which take into account members' socioeconomic and cultural differences and foster autonomy in condition self-management.

Results

Our findings revealed that although the evaluated SDOHs were associated with differences across participants in their starting glucose levels, these differences disappear after one year of enrollment in the Diabetes Management program.

After adjusting for participant characteristics, diabetes duration and medication usage, they **did not negatively impact program utilization or glycemic control**.⁶

Conclusion

Our study revealed that a person's income and education level do not negatively impact program utilization or health outcomes when using our Diabetes Management solution. In fact, our findings suggest that programs that address individualized needs can help break down barriers to care. It's clear, however, that we must continue to consider the individual needs of members to provide improved care and outcomes for everyone, everywhere.

¹Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

²Kind AJH, Buckingham W. "Making Neighborhood Disadvantage Metrics Accessible: The Neighborhood Atlas." New England Journal of Medicine. June 28, 2018.

³Defined as proportion of days with program usage \geq 75%

⁴As measured by an estimated A1c less than 7%

⁵Based on average self-monitoring blood glucose values

⁶Not statistically significant

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About Teladoc Health: Teladoc Health is empowering all people everywhere to live healthier lives by transforming the healthcare experience. Recognized as the world leader in whole-person virtual care, Teladoc Health leverages clinical expertise, advanced technology and actionable data insights to meet the evolving needs of consumers and healthcare professionals.

