

Telehealth: Interconnected Future of Healthcare in Emirate of Dubai, a Claims Data Analysis

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BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVE

- The advancements in medical and communications technology has had a profound impact on the healthcare services globally.
- Telehealth offers the opportunity to improve the delivery and accessibility of healthcare services.**
- Dubai Health Authority (DHA) supports establishment of telehealth infrastructure** with the aim of improvement of technological and innovative advances in medicine to enable low-cost accessible healthcare solutions in the Emirate of Dubai.
- In 2019, DHA issued the Standards for Telehealth Services** to set out the minimum Standards for the provision of Telehealth services among DHA licensed Health facilities to fulfil overarching DHA Strategic objectives & program within the DHA Health Strategy.
- The **objective** of the analysis was to characterize telehealth utilization and identify gaps in care.

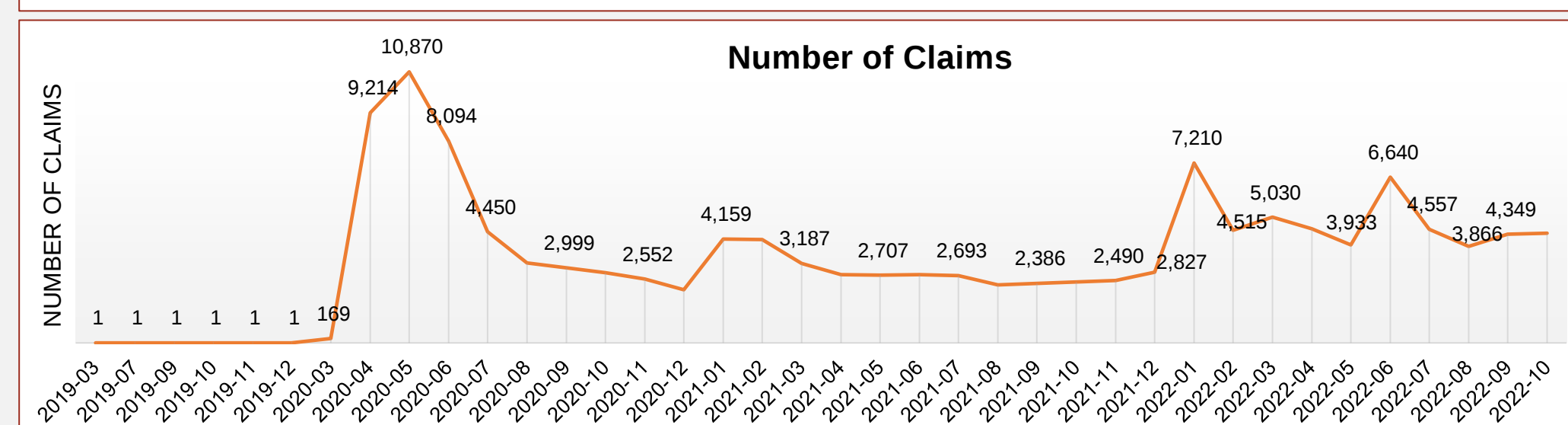
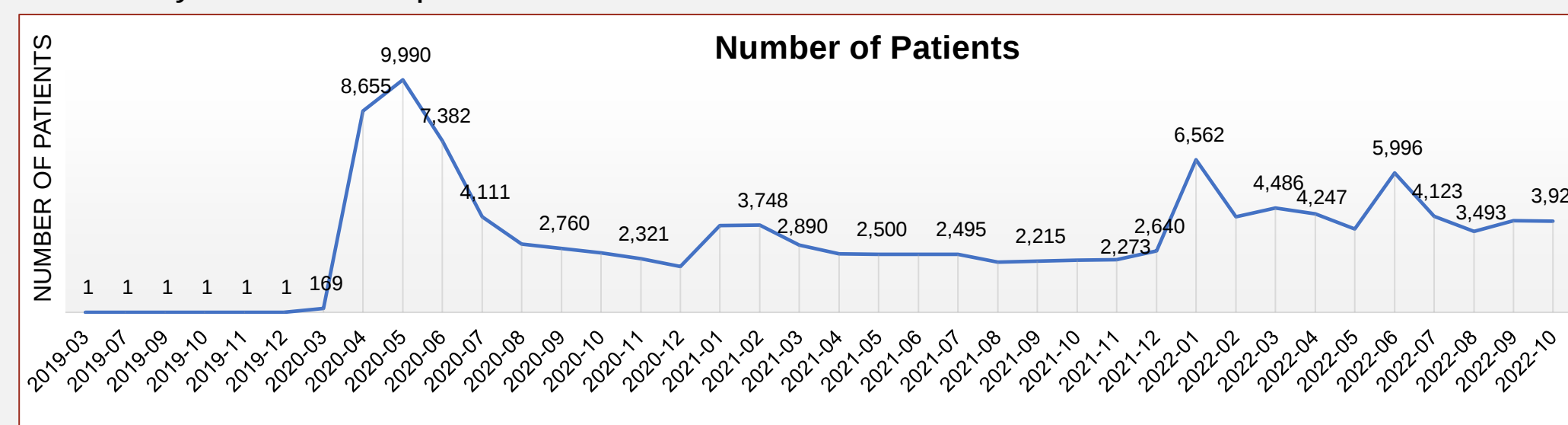
METHODOLOGY

- A **retrospective analysis** was conducted using **insurance e-claims** (Dubai Private Insurance—insured expatriates) database between **January 2019 to October 2022**.
- All **telehealth services claims** were **identified** to describe the trends in telehealth services and relative distribution by clinical condition as indicated by International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) codes and specialty.
- Pulse survey among healthcare professionals (HCPs)** was also conducted with the intent to understand the usage of teleconsultations.

RESULTS

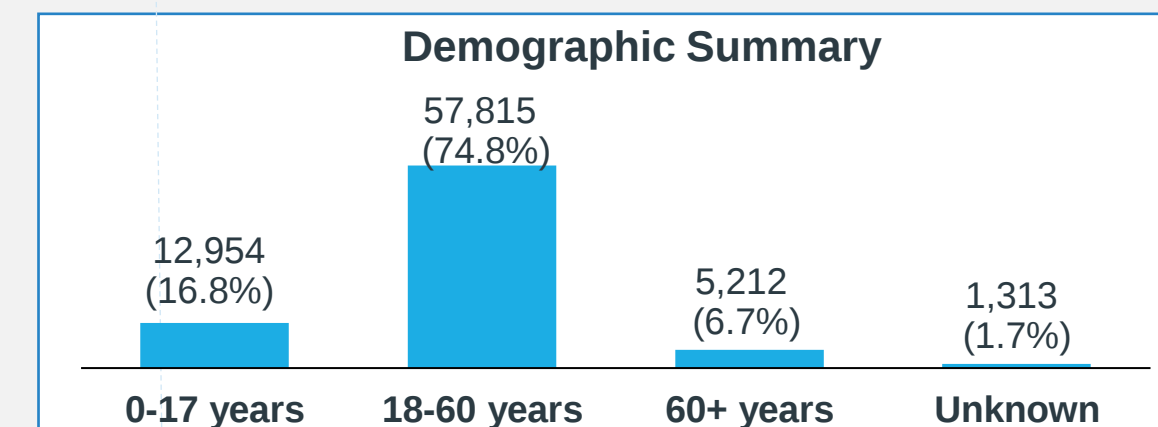
Patient and claim trends

- Growth in telehealth usage peaked in May 2020, stabilized in 2021 and started to show an uptrend again in 2022.**
- There was an immediate and dramatic rise in telehealth utilization in March 2020 across the emirate.
- This coincided with the temporary closing of many medical practices across the country and the need to move patients out of the hospital to free up inpatient bed capacity for the anticipated influx of acutely ill COVID-19 patients.

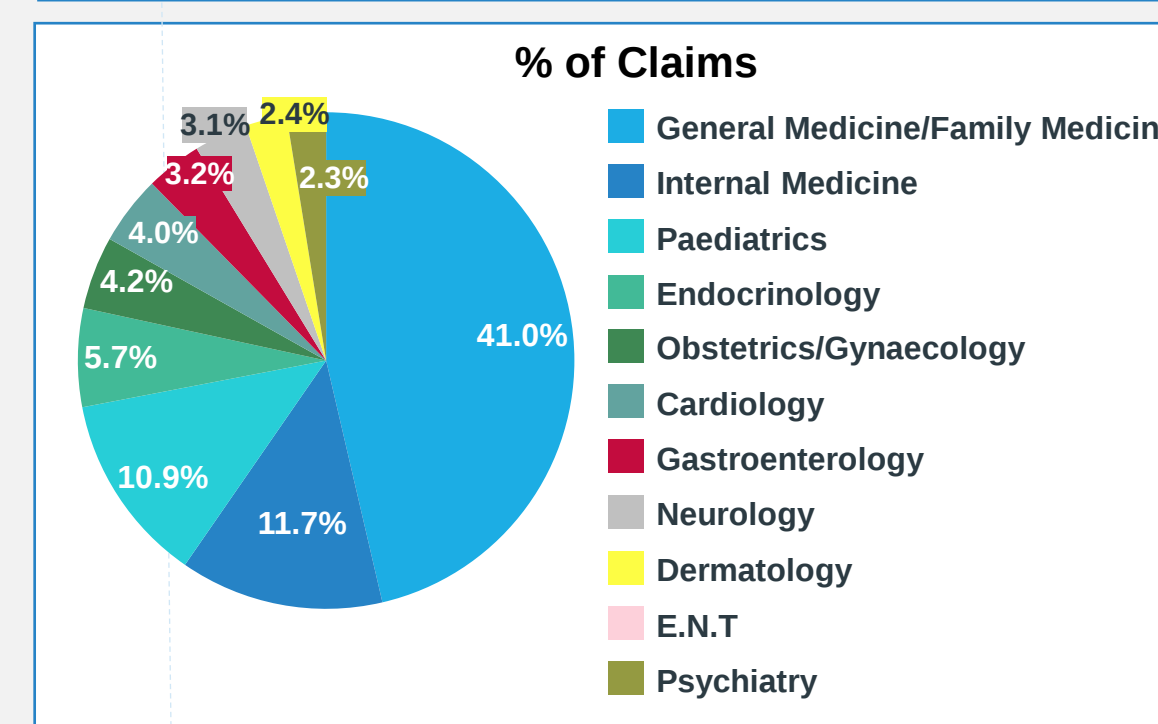


Demographics & Specialty

- Adults were most likely to utilize telehealth services, followed by children, while only 6.7% elderly utilized telehealth during the study timeframe.

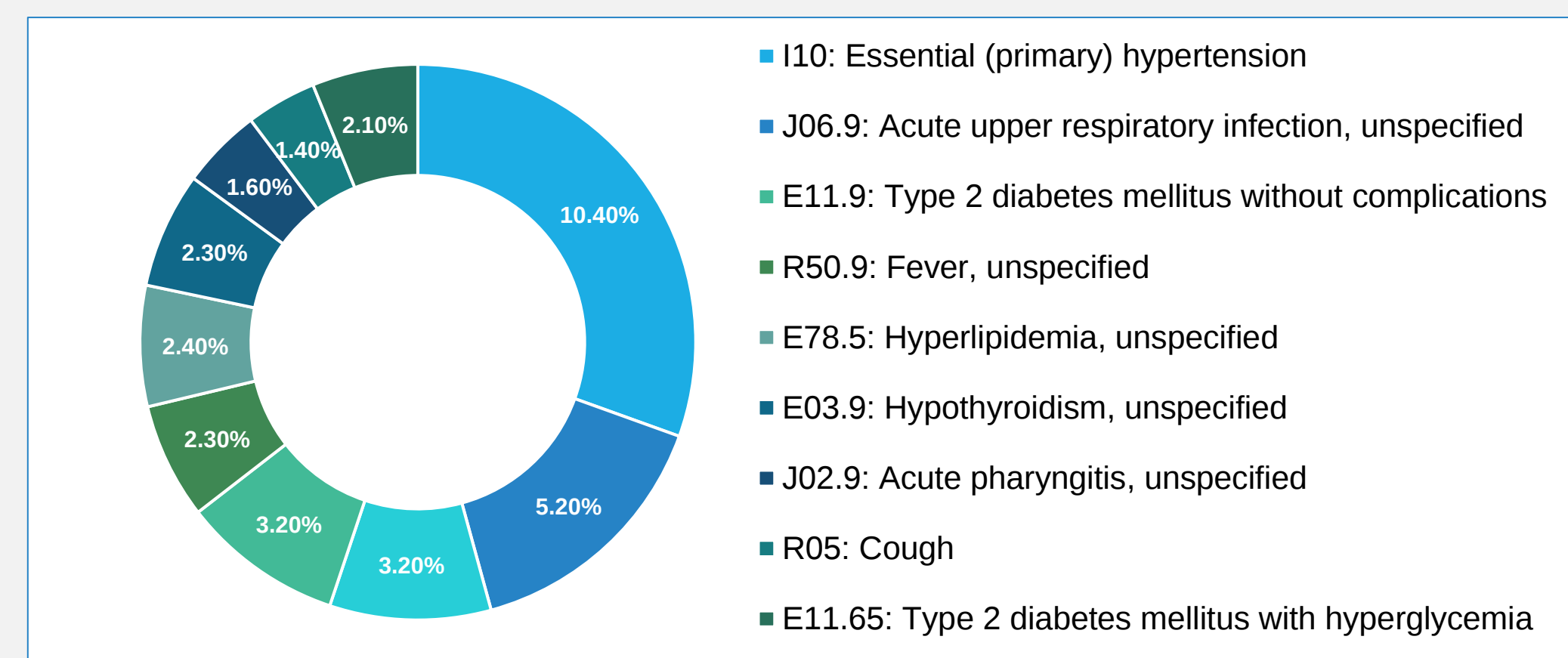


- Substantial variation exists in share of telehealth claims across specialties.**
- There was differential uptake of telehealth among specialties.
- Family medicine, internal medicine and pediatrics accounted for 63.7% of overall claims during the study period.



Diagnosis

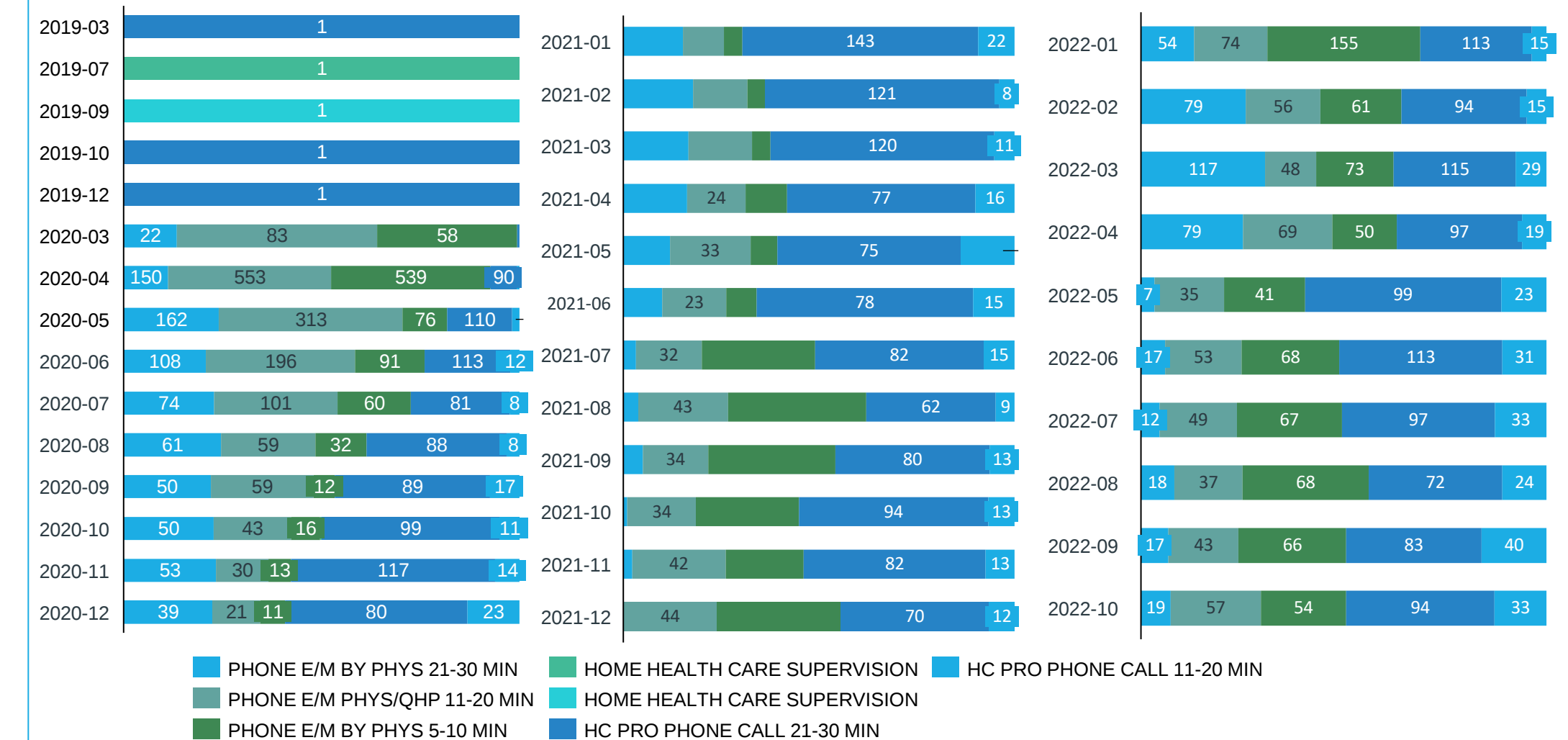
- Circulatory system, infectious diseases, endocrine nutritional and metabolic disorders were among the most common diagnostic categories accounting for 43.8% of patients utilizing telehealth.



Telehealth claims by CPT

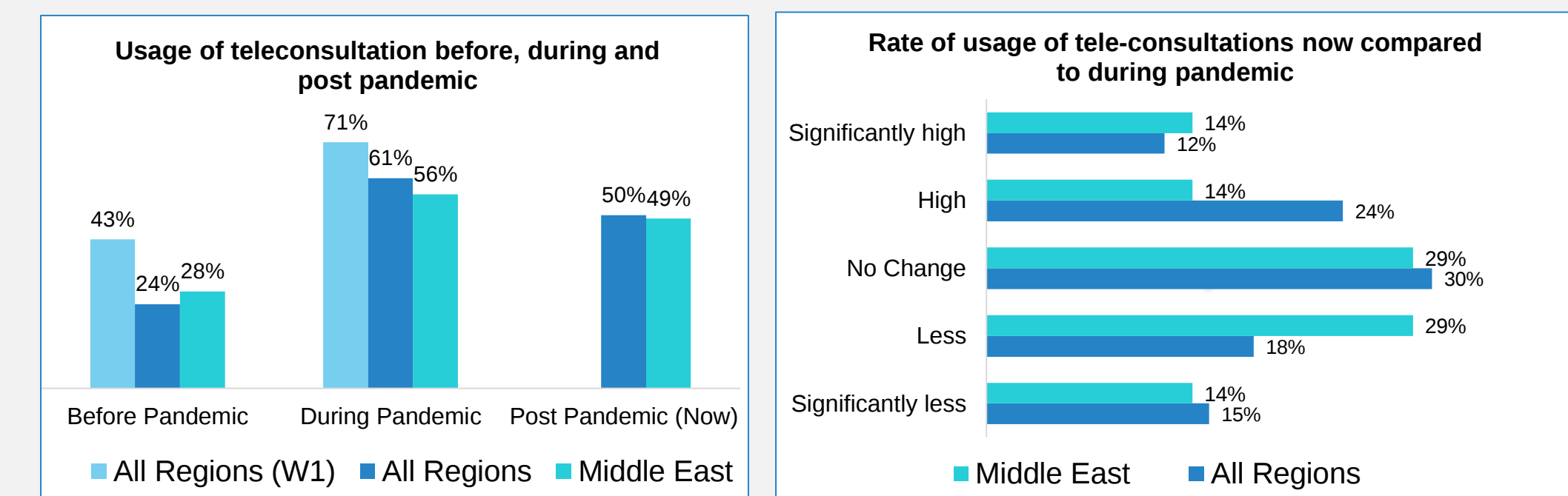
- There has been a gradual adjustment of duration of time spent on the teleconsultation outreach with patient/caregiver over the period (as described in the next figure)
- Most common E/M service was for an established patient through a telephone conversation lasting 21 to 30 mins., and nonphysician healthcare professional discussing via telephone, a new health issue and possible treatment or management with an established patient, parent, or guardian lasting 5 to 10 mins.

Telehealth claims by CPT



Pulse survey

- Many HCPs started teleconsultations during the study period. Of the HCPs who continued teleconsultations, about 2/3rd have maintained or increased the rate of the same.



Sample size 'n' is only for the current wave of the study; W1 = ~12 months post Covid start; Current wave (today) = ~30 months post covid start; Covid start = Mar-Apr 2020
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CONCLUSION

- The claims analysis during the study period shows an increase in telehealth use.
- Telehealth utilization has stabilized at levels higher than before the pandemic.
- Provider and consumer acceptance towards telehealth has improved.
- The dynamic reporting enables to identify trends in uptake of digital technology, which is particularly beneficial among patients with high-needs.
- The uptake of telehealth is a witness to the innovation of providers, adaptability of patients and is poised to be a robust option of patient care.

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