



Virtual Gastrointestinal Care Solutions

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Background on PHTI’s Report on Virtual Gastrointestinal Care Solutions

Gastrointestinal (GI) conditions affect more than 60 million people in the United States, with more than 60% of adults experiencing at least one frequent GI symptom, like constipation or diarrhea.¹

The most common GI condition is irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), which is linked to problems with how the gut and brain work together and can result in long-term symptoms. One of the most expensive GI conditions is inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), which causes changes in the digestive tract that doctors can see using tests like scopes, scans, or biopsies.

Both IBS and IBD are lifelong conditions that require ongoing treatment to reduce the frequency and severity of symptoms. Recommended care often involves a team of providers led by a gastroenterologist and may also include other specialists such as dietitians and mental health providers. This team-based approach is called “multidisciplinary care.”

However, because of shortages of gastroenterologists, as well as of other specialists that treat GI disorders, many patients have difficulty accessing multidisciplinary care. Long wait times are common, and in some areas, this level of care may not be available at all.

Recently, a number of virtual solutions designed specifically for patients with GI conditions have become available. These virtual solutions are designed to make it easier, and faster, for patients to get multidisciplinary treatment for their GI condition.

What PHTI Found

The Peterson Health Technology Institute (PHTI) is an independent nonprofit organization that conducts rigorous, evidence-based assessments of digital health tools. PHTI evaluated five virtual GI solutions to understand how well they work. For this assessment, PHTI looked at clinical and economic research and spoke with doctors, patients, and the companies that make these solutions. PHTI also conducted interviews with 10 patients with GI conditions who had experience with virtual solutions; patients were recruited for diversity across age, gender, race and ethnicity, income level, geography, and insurance type.

PHTI found that these virtual solutions fit into two buckets:

1 Wraparound solutions that work alongside a patient’s in-person doctor and provide additional support tools, such as coaching, nutrition counseling, and behavioral health services.

2 Clinician-led solutions that offer a virtual multidisciplinary GI clinic led by a gastroenterologist who oversees a patient’s care.

PHTI found that both types of solutions can help improve patients’ GI symptoms and can also help people avoid hospital stays and other medical visits. For patients with IBS, both types of solutions can help reduce the severity of symptoms and improve quality of life. For patients with IBD, clinician-led solutions may be able to provide the same level of care they would receive from an in-person, multidisciplinary care clinic.

““ You can get in to talk to someone almost immediately.

They have therapists that will work with the gut-mind connection with you as well, which I thought was a really cool offering. And then also a nutritionist.”

—Patient with IBS

““ You have those moments where you cannot get your gastroenterologist

or they take a long time to actually respond. The [virtual solution] is convenient. And they're there when you need them. They're flexible. Anytime you want to get in, you have a question, you can't get to a gastroenterologist, they're there. It gives you that sense of belonging and support.”

—Patient with IBD

What It Means for You

Managing GI conditions often means seeing many different healthcare providers. A virtual solution may make it easier for you to access these different types of providers. And these solutions also offer other services, such as diet counseling, care coordination, and symptom tracking.

If you have IBS, a wraparound solution that offers coaching and other services may be a good addition to your current care. If you have IBD, a clinician-led solution that gives you access to both a gastroenterologist and additional support services may be especially helpful. These solutions also may help you see a specialist faster when you need assistance with your care plan or during a flare-up.

You can share [PHTI's research](#) with your doctor to help decide which solution might work best for you.

Costs

If you are interested in a virtual solution for your GI condition, or if your provider recommends one, you may be able to access these programs through your insurance. Some virtual GI providers may be listed in your health plan's provider directory. Some of these solutions may be available at low or no cost through your employer or health plan.

Accessing PHTI's Full Report

You can access the full report [here](#).



¹ Anne F. Peery, Caitlin C. Murphy, Chelsea Anderson, et al., "Burden and Cost of Gastrointestinal, Liver, and Pancreatic Diseases in the United States: Update 2024," *Gastroenterology* 168, no. 5 (2025): 1000–1024. <https://doi.org/10.1053/j.gastro.2024.12.029>.