

# QUERI Evaluation of Video Telehealth Tablets

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Quality Enhancement Research Initiative

Evaluating and improving the impact of VA Tablets for high-risk Veterans

The Enhancing Veterans' Access to Care through Video Telehealth Tablets QUERI Partnered Evaluation Initiative aims to evaluate the effectiveness of VA-issued tablets for high-risk Veterans to identify opportunities to improve the program and examine the costs associated with implementing and sustaining the program.

## Evaluate Opportunities to Improve Veteran Access

### Clinician in clinic or other setting (e.g., home)

VA desktop/laptop/tablet; DX/EX or CODEC



### Veteran at home/work

VA issued tablet



Of the approximate nine million enrolled Veterans receiving VA healthcare, **nearly one-third live in rural, highly-rural, and insular island areas**, and many others experience transportation and financial challenges that are deterrents to using VA care. These barriers are further compounded for the **2 million Veterans with mental health conditions**, some of whom avoid care due to perceived stigma or privacy concerns.

In 2016, VA initiated a program to distribute video-enabled tablets to Veterans with geographic, clinical, or social access barriers to in-person care so that they could receive services in their homes or other convenient locations

In partnership with the VA Offices of Rural Health and Connected Care, this evaluation is examining the VA's tablet initiative to determine the effectiveness of tablets and examine time-sensitive questions about the impact of virtual care on VA priorities. We will identify areas in which virtual care may benefit Veterans through changes in utilization of VA services, increased access to care, and potential cost savings to VA and to Veterans (i.e., time and travel).

### Benefits of the Tablet Program

- Increased mental health encounters
- Improved continuity of care
- Patients saved time and money
- Increase in patient satisfaction with VA care



VA Quality Enhancement Research Initiative

# QUERI

Evidence into Practice

# Assess Tablets and VA Digital Divide Consult

Guided by the PRISM framework, we will evaluate the VA's tablet initiative in a Hybrid II trial.

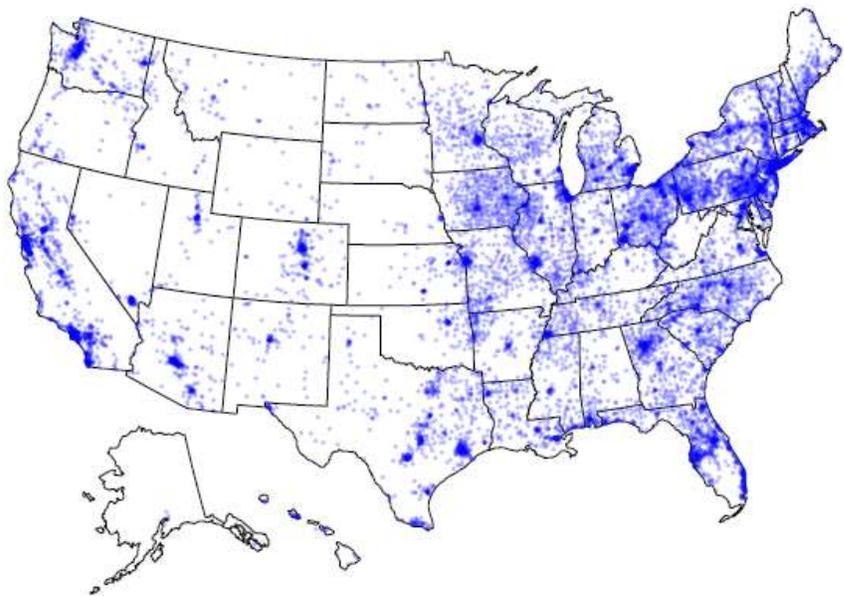
- Identify opportunities to **enhance the reach, adoption, and implementation of the tablet initiative**
- Evaluate the **effectiveness of tablets** and whether VA's Digital Divide Consult increases tablet distribution to high-need patients.
- Examine the tablet initiative's **maintenance potential through a budget impact analysis** of costs associated with implementing and sustaining the tablet program.

## Examine High-Risk Veteran Access to Technology

### Tablet Shipments by Zip Code between 3/11-11/6/2020 (N=52,550)

Since March 2020, virtual care has rapidly expanded as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Video-to-home visits were encouraged because of the perceived opportunity for a more comprehensive visit via video.

Between March 1 and April 30, 2020, VA distributed tablets to more than 850 inpatient settings and more than 7,000 high risk Veterans with access needs (including to State Veterans Homes and CLCs). Since March, more than 52,550 Veterans have received tablets, and more than 70% have a mental health condition.



The primary VA virtual visits on the tablets continue to be mental health, but a growing proportion are being used for primary and specialty care

For Veterans with multiple comorbidities living in rural or broadband-poor areas, a quality connection posed a challenge, resulting in fewer than optimal high-risk Veterans engaging in care by video using the tablet.

For more information, check out:  
<https://www.queri.research.va.gov/>

If you would like to learn more or partner with us, please contact the program manager Cindie Slightam, MPH at [Cindie.slightam@va.gov](mailto:Cindie.slightam@va.gov)

Principal Investigators:  
Donna M. Zulman, MD, MS  
Palo Alto, CA