#### **Research Question:** How has the increased use of Telehealth in the US increased access to medical care for Medicare and Medicaid members?

**Data Use:**

The data used is publicly available. If cited, then the data is permitted for use in research.

* The *Medicare Telehealth Trends* dataset is publicly available through Data.gov, a platform that provides open government data permitting use for research.

**Data Wrangling (Steps taken: merging data, removing NA, and renaming variables) :**

* *Medicare Telehealth Trends* dataset variable names were renamed from the names in the original dataset for easier interpretation. Variable definitions were found in the *Medicare Telehealth Trends Data Dictionary.*
* Included NA values which needed to be removed.

**Variable Description:**

1. ***Medicare Telehealth Trends***

Data represents patients with Medicare and/or Medicaid who reported using telehealth services during and after the pandemic.

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| **Variable** | **Description** | **Data Type** | **Acceptable Values** |
| Year | the data year from which the Part B Medicare claims were pulled | Integer | 2020,  2021,  2022,  2023,  2024 |
| Quarter | The quarter of the year grouped by months  1 (Jan - March)  2 (April - June)  3 (July - Sept)  4 (Oct - Dec) | Character | Overall,  1,  2,  3,  4 |
| State | The state of the beneficiary is based on mailing address | Character | State names ie Alabama, Alaska, Arizona …. |
| EnrollmentStatus | Beneficiaries enrollment status. (Note: those enrolled in both, only claims covered by Medicare are included in this data) | Character | All Medicare & Medicaid  Medicare Only |
| Race | Race based on beneficiary race code that has historically been used by the Social Security Administration | Character | All, American Indian/Alaska Native,  Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Hispanic, Non-Hispanic White,  Other/Unknown |
| Sex | Beneficiary’s sex is available from the CMS enrollment database | Character | All,  Male,  Female |
| MedicareAccessForInsured | Medicare is available to three groups of "insured individuals" - the Aged, the Disabled, and those with end stage renal disease (ESRD). | Character | All,  Aged,  Disabled,  ESRD |
| Age | Beneficiary’s age at the end of the data year | Character | All,  0-64,  65-74,  75-84,  85 and over |
| RuralUrban | Status is defined using the Rural Urban Commuting Area Crosswalk (RUCA) which uses Zip Code and commuting data from the US Census | Character | All,  Rural,  Urban,  Unknown |
| EligibleServicesCount | Number of unique Medicare beneficiaries who received telehealth *eligible* services (regardless of whether it was telehealth or not) | Integer | Numerical count of beneficiaries |
| EnrollmentPartB | The total Medicare population with Part B Fee-for-Service Insurance (Covers medical services, outpatient care, and many preventative services) | Numerical (decimals)l | Numerical count of beneficiaries.  (Using *person-year counts* which is sum total number months that each beneficiary is enrolled in Part B during the year / 12) |
| TelehealthVisits | Number of unique Medicare beneficiaries with telehealth visit | Integer | Numerical count of beneficiaries |
| PercentTelehealthPartB | (# unique Medicare Part B beneficiaries who received at least one telehealth service) / (total # of beneficiaries who received at least one telehealth service) | Numerical  (decimals) | Decimal value representing the percentage |

**Ethical Considerations**

* The observations in this dataset are anonymous and I will not be handling specific personal health information.
* I will explore the demographic variables of the participants in this data to understand utilization of telehealth services and access to care.
* A potential limitation of the data is that it only represents Medicare and Medicaid members. Further research will be needed to understand the larger population. However Medicare and Medicaid members are likely a population at risk for low telehealth use due to

**Bibliography**

CMS Program Statistics - OEDA (2025). *Medicare Telehealth Trends.* [Data set]. Centers for

Medicare & Medicaid Services. [https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/medicare-telemedicine](https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/medicare-telemedicine-snapshot)

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Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. (2024, October 30). *Medicare Telehealth Trends*

*Data Dictionary*. Data.CMS.gov. <https://data.cms.gov/resources/medicare-telehealth-trends-data-dictionary>