



## Athenahealth's Connected Network Reveals Recent Increase in Primary Care Visits Involving Mental & Behavioral Health Care

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### Company's national dataset shows shifting patterns in primary care due to COVID-19

WATERTOWN, Mass., May 19, 2020 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- athenahealth, Inc., a leading provider of network-enabled software and services for medical groups and health systems nationwide, today unveiled a data analysis revealing that in the early weeks of COVID-19, primary care clinicians spent proportionately more time treating patients for mental and behavioral health conditions than just before the pandemic. The data indicates that in March and April, a high percentage of patient visits included a diagnosis of anxiety, depression and ADHD, as well as related medication prescriptions, for specific ages and genders.

Even as many patients are forgoing in-person care due to concerns about COVID-19, patients and providers are still able to connect on mental health treatment, likely because these diagnoses are manageable through telehealth visits. The increased availability of telehealth, combined with increasing concerns about health and financial stability, may help explain the significant changes in what is being discussed in primary care visits. Additionally, quarantine and shelter-in-place mandates are creating social isolation stress for many individuals. This can be especially challenging for children and teenagers who are used to daily social activities and are also grappling with the transition to online learning for the foreseeable future.

### Share of Patient Visits with First-Time Anxiety Diagnosis Increases by 44% Among Women

According to athenahealth's deidentified data, March 2020 saw a steep increase in the percentage of primary care visits that involved a first-time anxiety diagnosis or prescription for antianxiety medication, particularly in women aged 30-64. Between the week of March 9<sup>th</sup> and the week of March 30<sup>th</sup>, the share of visits with a first-time anxiety diagnosis among women in this age group grew by 44% (a 25% increase was observed for men of the same age). Women, who are generally more likely to take antianxiety medications, were 1.7 times as likely to be prescribed an antianxiety medication during a visit than men during the week of March 9<sup>th</sup>, but this gap was 1.9 times by the week of March 16<sup>th</sup>. Additionally, total prescriptions for antianxiety medications spiked by 23% for women during the week of March 16<sup>th</sup> before returning to normal levels the following week.

### 41% of Patient Visits Among Kids and Teens Involve Discussion of Depression

The data also revealed that a higher percentage of patients under 18 with a history of depression who visited a primary care clinician discussed the diagnosis during a visit in March and early April. Twenty-seven percent of these visits during the week of March 9<sup>th</sup> involved a discussion of depression, but this percentage rose to 41% by the week of April 13<sup>th</sup>. During the same time period, antidepressant prescription renewals for this group followed a similar trend, and there was a more gradual increase in share of visits involving first-time antidepressant prescriptions among teenagers.

### Share of Patient Visits with First-Time ADHD Diagnosis Rises by 66% for Kids and Teens

ADHD diagnoses and medication prescriptions also represented a rising share of patient care, especially for teen boys without a history of ADHD. From the week of March 9<sup>th</sup> to the week of March 30<sup>th</sup>, the proportion of visits by teen boys that involved a first-time diagnosis grew by two-thirds. Additionally, a greater percentage of visits by children and teenagers of both genders with previous ADHD diagnoses involved a discussion of their diagnosis or a related prescription renewal during this same time period, according to athenahealth's data. This may be due to parents being with their children more to notice symptoms, as well as a significant increase in availability of telehealth appointments, which is giving parents easier access to having their children screened for the disorder.

"COVID-19 has caused Americans unprecedented levels of stress, and it's evident that our new reality is causing people of all ages and genders to reach out to their physicians for guidance and support," said Jessica Sweeney-Platt, Executive Director, Research and Insights for athenahealth. "The trends we're seeing from our data are even more striking when we consider that fewer patients are seeing their doctors in person right now. We hope that by shining a light on this data, we can encourage patients to leverage tools like telehealth to stay in close communication with their providers and get the help they need, especially during this emotionally difficult time."

This research is the latest in a series from athenahealth revealing insights about the COVID-19 pandemic gleaned from the company's deidentified data. Previously, the company announced the [COVID-19 lab test dashboard](#), which provides a visual representation of the number of lab tests ordered over time by clinicians, and the [COVID-19 high-risk populations dashboard](#), which helps detect concentrations of patients on a county-by-county basis that are at a high risk of serious illness if they contract COVID-19. Data from these dashboards is being leveraged in the [COVID-19 Healthcare Coalition](#), an industry group of healthcare organizations, technology firms, nonprofits, academia, and startups that are working together to flatten the pandemic's curve and protect populations.

To learn more about the mental and behavioral health care trends discussed above, please visit "[Mental health care an increasing focus of primary care during COVID-19.](#)"

For more on athenahealth's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit <https://www.athenahealth.com/knowledge-hub/covid>.

### About athenahealth, Inc.

athenahealth partners with medical organizations across the country to drive clinical and financial results. Our vision is to create a thriving ecosystem that delivers accessible, high-quality, and sustainable healthcare for all, and we are pursuing this through our medical record, revenue cycle, patient engagement, and care coordination service offerings. Our expert teams build modern technology on an open, connected ecosystem, yielding insights that make a difference for our customers and their patients. For more information, please visit [www.athenahealth.com](http://www.athenahealth.com).

### Contact:

Jean Borgman  
[media@athenahealth.com](mailto:media@athenahealth.com)  
617-402-1031