

Review of: "Six Months of Remote Patient Monitoring is Associated with Blood Pressure Reduction in Hypertensive Patients: An Uncontrolled, Observational Study"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Other reviewers have made some excellent points about this study, and it's important – essential – to first acknowledge that this paper is not a randomized controlled trial, but an observational study. As such, it is an important addition to the literature and, potentially, to Medicare payment policy.

I agree with some of the reviewers that understanding when the BP measurement was taken is important because BP measurement varies greatly for any patient during the day and that can affect some of the observations. For example, if the group with the next lowest level of MAP systematically took their measurement in the morning while those in the third lowest took the measurement at the end of the day, that could skew the conclusions of the effect of the measurement. Or, if one group shifted during the measurement period from taking the measurement in the beginning of the day to the end of the day it could account for a significant portion of the decrease in the MAP.

However, the fact that those in the highest MAP zone managed to decrease their MAP during the measurement period should not be a surprise. There is ample literature in behavioral economics that suggests that reducing the potential for loss of health due to high MAP readings would prompt the patients to work to better manage and control their blood pressure. In that sense, this paper has a lot of value.

Whether in a revision of this paper or a follow-on, ensuring that the measurements across cohorts are done at the same time of day would remove the potential for some error in the findings.

From a payment policy perspective, this paper brings to the forefront the importance of triggering the billing for RPM based on the severity of a patient's condition rather than the seemingly arbitrary number of days during which the monitoring has taken place. That's also more consistent with the broader movement to value-based payments.