

Mobile telehealth market set to surge

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Several factors are coming together that will enable the broader telemedicine market - and mobile telehealth tools in particular - to expand quickly as the business case becomes increasingly apparent.

The roll-out of the Affordable Care Act, escalating demand for care, as well as a lack of easy access to health professionals will push the market for telehealth services, according to Frost & Sullivan.

The firm's new report, *Pulse of Telehealth 2014*, finds that the growing aging population will need to manage and monitor multiple chronic diseases, turning to mobile telehealth and remote patient monitoring.

"The momentum for telehealth is building rapidly as the practice of providing remote clinical services becomes entrenched in every aspect of healthcare in North America," said Nancy Fabozzi, Frost & Sullivan Connected Health's principal analyst. "Technological advancements that deliver rich, connected platforms with high visual and audio quality add to the business case for telehealth."

The report said telehealth videoconferencing will emerge as a primary and specialty healthcare service delivery application. The study is based on interviews conducted with telehealth stakeholders along with discussions initiated at the American Telemedicine Association annual meeting.

Despite telehealth's potential, numerous barriers to adoption still exist. Patient privacy and safety concerns remain unresolved and insufficient public and private reimbursement policies may slow widespread uptake of telehealth, Frost & Sullivan said.

Complex state provider licensing and regulatory issues will also need to be simplified and streamlined.

"As the scope of telehealth expands, a number of technology and services vendors will make their entry into the market," Fabozzi added. "Disease-specific vendors, in particular, will seek to capitalize on specialist shortages in critical areas such as mental health and neurology."

Frost & Sullivan predicted that large technology vendors - notably Amazon, Apple, Google and Samsung - will drive innovation as they seek to capitalize on market opportunities in this sector.