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Expanding virtual collaboration tools beyond meetings: Healthcare and life science leaders are considering new use cases

Similar to other industries, healthcare organizations have seen a transformation in how their employees work in recent years. Many healthcare institutions including health systems, pharmaceutical companies, and research organizations have transitioned to fully remote or hybrid work models that result in greater usage of virtual collaboration tools.

Due to the popularity of remote work environments among employees, as well as greater familiarity and expectation among consumers of virtual tools, healthcare leaders are taking stock of the role virtual collaboration tools play in their operations now and in the future.

To gain a better understanding of how healthcare organizations are currently using virtual collaboration tools, and their plans for the future, Zoom partnered with Modern Healthcare Custom Media to survey healthcare and life sciences professionals about this topic. From November to January, 228 responses were gathered. Those who participated in the survey are employed at a variety of healthcare and life sciences institutions: 37% in a hospital setting; 26% at a pharmaceutical or biotechnology company; 17% at a laboratory or research institution; 15% at a clinical or research organization and 2% at an outpatient care setting such as a medical clinic, nursing home or ambulatory surgery center.

In this executive brief, we'll share insights from the survey on the virtual collaboration tools healthcare and life sciences organizations are currently using and how they are using them. Additionally, we'll dive into the virtual collaboration technology organizations plan to add in the future and potential new areas of the business to apply them. Finally, we'll explore who leads purchasing of virtual technology and the considerations made when selecting a platform or solutions.

Virtual collaboration tools are used largely for communication, video technology most popular way to do it

There are common reasons the healthcare and life sciences industries are turning to virtual collaboration tools right now, our research shows.

When asked how their organization is currently using virtual collaboration tools, selecting all options that apply, 90% of respondents said to communicate internally and externally. This isn't surprising considering the transition from remote or hybrid work environments due to the hyper digitalization of most processes since the pandemic.

In line with this, when asked in a separate question which virtual tools are currently being used to collaborate within your organization, selecting all options that apply, 93% chose virtual meeting technology and 72% selected chat or instant messaging. Video meetings and instant messaging are the most effective ways for colleagues to still communicate with each other and their customers while benefiting from the flexibility virtual models offer to both employees and patients.

While virtual meeting technology and instant messaging are commonly used by healthcare organizations to collaborate internally, smart conference rooms and cloud-based phone systems are less widespread, according to the survey. Just 38% answered their organization uses smart conference rooms to collaborate and only 29% said their organization uses cloud-based phone systems.

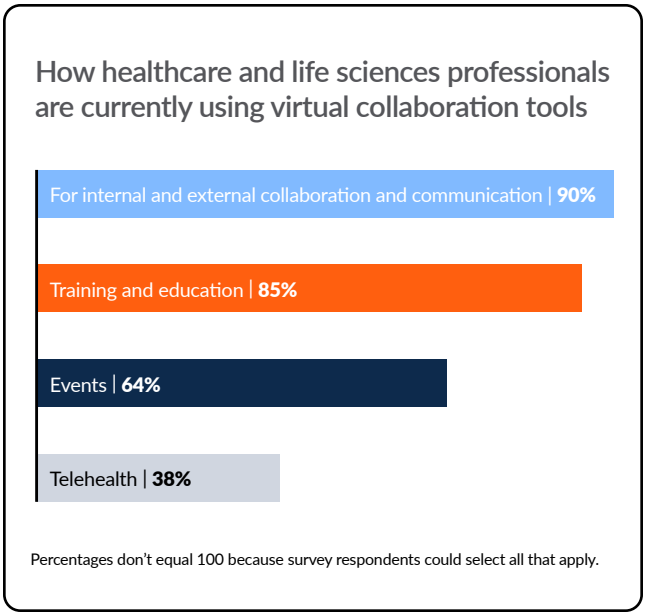
Smart conference rooms, which are spaces that integrate software and technology so both remote and in-person employees can have equal experiences, are likely not used as widely yet because the hybrid work environment is still relatively new, and assembling such rooms require investment.

As far as cloud-based phone systems, they use voice over internet protocol technology rather than analog phone lines. The benefits of cloud-based phone systems are enabling employees to receive calls to their office line from anywhere using local numbers in many countries, as well as transferring calls across devices in a seamless manner, mirroring a workflow that changes locations. As workplaces become more mobile and flexible, it's a convenient feature for organizations to consider that will make work easier for employees.

There are likely a few reasons why the adoption of cloud-based phone systems scored on the lower side, such as cost of implementation, compliance regulations, and current infrastructure at the physical site.

Not far behind using virtual collaboration tools for communication internally and externally, was using the tools for training and education, with 85% of survey participants answering their organization used the tools for those purposes. Zoom healthcare customers have reported that this technology is keeping clinicians abreast with the latest medical research, offering wellness services, helping to onboard new staff members, and training clinicians in new specialties, in a convenient and accessible format.

In addition to training, 38% said virtual collaboration technology is used for telehealth appointments or virtual visits.



Looking ahead: Applying virtual collaboration to research, clinical trials, and more

Although it's now common in the healthcare and life sciences industries to see virtual collaboration technology used for internal meetings and training, the survey suggests there may be opportunities in the future to expand the technology to other areas.

When asked which areas your organization is not using virtual collaboration tools, but may have opportunity for adoption in the future, with the ability to pick more than one answer, 28% of survey participants selected clinical trials, 25% selected laboratory research, 23% answered drug manufacturing and drug go-to-market sales and 21% selected the regulatory review process.

Adoption of virtual collaboration technologies in the clinical trial space has the potential to enhance patient recruitment and participation. Right now, clinical trials sometimes struggle to get sufficient participation numbers because patients who qualify either live too far from the site or the requirements for on-site treatment or visits aren't realistic for their situation. Decentralized clinical trials, which are currently being explored, involve the integration of video technology and remote patient monitoring abilities, enabling patients to cut down on in-person visits required for trial participation and allows clinical trial members who are not near trial sites to participate.

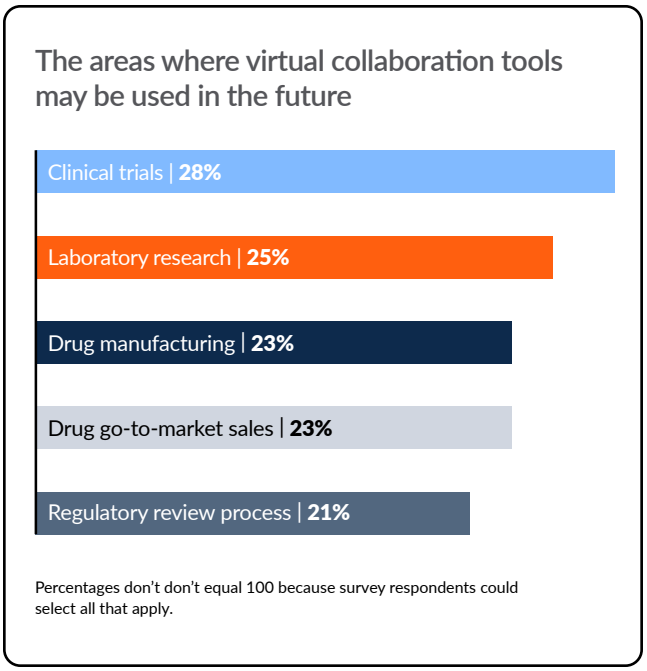
Laboratory research can gain from wider use of virtual collaboration technologies as well. Not all research institutions

have the level of resources necessary to conduct a study. Collaborating with other research institutions and researchers from across the country, and even the globe, is a way to solve for resource constraints. Researchers can work efficiently with collaborators virtually by adopting meeting technology, smart conference rooms and instant messaging. Imagine the ability to share microscope images and videos in real-time with principal investigators in other locations, for example.

Implementing virtual collaboration tools at pharmaceutical companies can help improve drug manufacturing processes and the sales teams' success rate. A breakdown in equipment can lead to delays in production if a technician is not immediately available to travel and solve the issue. Virtual technology enables quick and easy access to knowledgeable technicians from across your organization who can be informed of the issue and offer assistance, without even needing to come on site. The faster equipment is fixed also means less impact to an organization's bottom line.

In terms of how virtual collaboration technology can assist sales, video sales meetings can be an effective strategy. Rather than dropping in on doctors to get a moment of their time to discuss a product, sales teams can schedule a video meeting in advance. That ensures you have the physician's undivided attention, leading to a better interaction overall and even enhancing the likelihood of a successful sale.

Healthcare and life sciences professionals see value in implementing more virtual tools



In addition to potentially adopting virtual collaboration tools to new areas of the business, our research also found organizations are planning to add more virtual collaboration tools in the future.

When answering what collaboration capabilities does your organization plan to add in the next year, selecting all that apply, 18% of respondents said virtual meeting technology, 17% said smart conference rooms, 13% selected cloud-based phone systems and 9% said chat functionality. At the same time, 14% said their organization doesn't plan to add virtual collaboration tools other than direct patient care within the next year.

This demonstrates the continued value many healthcare and life science organizations are placing on virtual collaboration tools as part of their long-term strategic goals. Moving information rather than people is more efficient and it fits well into the often complex environment of bringing clinical trial patients, researchers and clinicians together.

CIOs, CFOs and CTOs likely purchase virtual collaboration tools

InIn terms of how an organization selects the virtual collaboration provider they will use, there are several members of the C-suite who handle purchasing decisions, the survey shows.

The most common titles who drive purchases related to virtual collaboration platforms and tools are chief information officers (41%), chief financial officers (40%), and chief technology officers (38%). Twenty-six percent of respondents selected the chief security officer or chief information security officer leading purchasing decisions.

The fact that members of the C-suite drive this decision at most organizations illustrates the importance of virtual collaboration tools to overall operations.

The approach to purchasing is not clear cut, however, according to the survey. Twenty-nine percent of the survey participants said they prefer to use one platform for all their virtual collaboration tools, such as using the same company for video meetings in addition to telehealth appointments. Twenty-two percent of respondents said they look for the best-in-class solutions for each of the needs at their organizations, even if that means purchasing multiple products or services from different vendors. The remaining respondents—49%—answered they were not involved in purchasing decisions, but they can still have an influence.

Despite the results, there are benefits to using one platform for all virtual collaboration tools across an organization. Firstly, it can make for a better user experience for both your workforce and your customers. Rather than getting accustomed to many different platforms with different functions, there is consistency, leading to less confusion and more productivity.

Another benefit is improved workflows. By using the same platform, workflows can be streamlined by allowing for a single scheduling and documentation process.

For those who will buy products from different vendors if it fits their needs, they should consider using virtual collaboration technology providers that can integrate with other platforms.

According to our research, there are also common considerations when purchasing virtual collaboration tools that leaders make when deciding what provider to do business with. When asked what are the top three considerations your organization makes when purchasing virtual collaboration tools, the most common answers were: ease of adoption for staff and users (74%), privacy and security (65%) and cost to use (65%). Other considerations that were less common were time it takes to implement (23%), services the healthcare industry already (10%) and brand awareness (4%).

How Zoom can help healthcare and life sciences organizations

As healthcare organizations consider new use cases for virtual collaboration tools, as well as adoption of new virtual collaboration tools, consider Zoom as a partner in that goal.

Zoom offers healthcare, pharma-biotech and medical device organizations with a secure, scalable platform to meet their demands. Zoom's consistent video experience and ability to integrate with popular electronic health record platforms, can help streamline the telehealth experience for patients and providers.

Zoom's scalable platform also allows complex healthcare and life sciences organizations to adopt one platform that fits all their business needs from direct clinical care to the seamless execution of research grants and clinical trials. For more information, please visit https://explore.zoom.us/docs/en-us/hybrid-workforce-healthcare.html.

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ABOUT THE SURVEY

Modern Healthcare Custom Media, on behalf of Zoom, commissioned Signet Research, Inc., an independent company, to conduct a survey of healthcare professionals. The objective of this study was to learn about organizations' use of virtual collaboration tools in their daily operations across the health and life sciences spectrum.

On November 11, 2021, Modern Healthcare Custom Media sent a broadcast email to Modern Healthcare registrants asking them to participate in a survey. An email was also sent to GenomeWeb registrants. Subsequent reminder emails were sent between November 16 and December 2. By the closing date of January 4, 2022, 228 returns had been received. The base used is the total number of respondents who answered each question. Survey findings may be considered accurate to a 95% confidence level, within a sampling tolerance of approximately +/- 6.5%.