

My Telehealth

Q&A

With Amanda Greene
PATIENT ADVOCATE



Q: Why is telemedicine valuable to people, like you, who live with lupus?

There are so many variables with lupus. Having the flexibility to do an appointment virtually is incredibly helpful.

For instance, you never know what symptoms you'll experience until you wake up. It's different for every patient. I experience joint pain, inflammation and extreme bouts of fatigue. Sometimes, I have tenderness in my feet and ankles, which can make

walking or simply getting out of bed in the morning painful. Triggers, such as fluorescent lighting and stress, can make my symptoms worse and lead to flare-ups.

“Telemedicine simplified my life.”

With all these factors, having to make every doctor's visit in person can be hard.

Q: How has telemedicine impacted your life?

Telemedicine has simplified my life.

I live in Los Angeles, where commute times are long and parking is expensive. Since my symptoms vary, I see multiple health care providers every month. Rheumatologist, internist and dermatologist, to name a few. Prior to the pandemic, every appointment was in person. Scheduling and commuting to these appointments was difficult, and it felt inconvenient when sometimes all I needed was a prescription refill.

Tel·e·health
noun

A big step toward patient-centered care

Now there's telemedicine. The "commute" from my bedroom to my computer is much easier than the commute from my home to my health care provider's office.

Q: How does a telemedicine visit compare to an in-person visit when you're dealing with lupus?

Ease and convenience are big factors. A telemedicine visit eliminates the need to sit in a waiting room full of patients. I also know that, whether it's through a virtual headset, phone call or video call, I can count on my health care provider to be fully present and focused on me and my condition.

Telemedicine also lets my doctor see when visible symptoms flare up – and right away. For example, when mouth sores appear, I can conveniently reach for my flashlight to show my doctor. I no longer have to book an appointment, endure a long commute and sit in an uncomfortable waiting room.

But there are also things that telemedicine can't do. Telemedicine *can't* replace physical touch. My rheumatologist can't

feel my inflammation, for instance, to differentiate between fibromyalgia and arthritis symptoms.

Q: What is the biggest benefit of telemedicine?

Telemedicine is a big step toward patient-centered care.

Long before the coronavirus pandemic, I had hoped for access to telemedicine services to help me manage lupus more efficiently. When COVID-19 policies expanded health care coverage for telemedicine, it finally gave me that chance, that tool that I needed.

Although the world will open back up, autoimmune patients like me will still be high risk. Extended coverage for telemedicine services will allow me to decide how to guard my health, whether it's through in-person or virtual care.

My hope is that policymakers, insurance companies and health care providers continue to see patient access to telemedicine as an integral part of smart health care.

I no longer have to endure a long commute and sit in an uncomfortable waiting room.



PATIENT & PROVIDER
**Advocates
for Telehealth**