



Salem STATE UNIVERSITY

# Researching Virtual Specialty Care For Boston Children's Hospital

## A Competitive Analysis of Virtual Specialty Care Across U.S. Hospitals

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### INTRODUCTION

Virtual Specialty Care has become a valuable extension of healthcare access, especially for families seeking expert consultations without the burden of travel. While many health systems now offer some form of virtual care, the way services are explained and accessed online varies significantly.

This internship project focused on understanding how leading U.S. hospitals present Virtual Specialty Care through their digital platforms. The goal was to identify common practices, patient-facing barriers, and innovative approaches that enhance access and clarity for families.

### INTERNSHIP PROJECT OBJECTIVE

Conduct a detailed analysis of how pediatric and specialty health systems present Virtual Specialty Care online

Evaluate factors such as landing page clarity, service descriptions, language support, and pricing transparency

Identify trends in booking flow, geographic access, and user experience

Develop a structured Excel tracker and research-based recommendations to guide improvements in patient communication and digital strategy



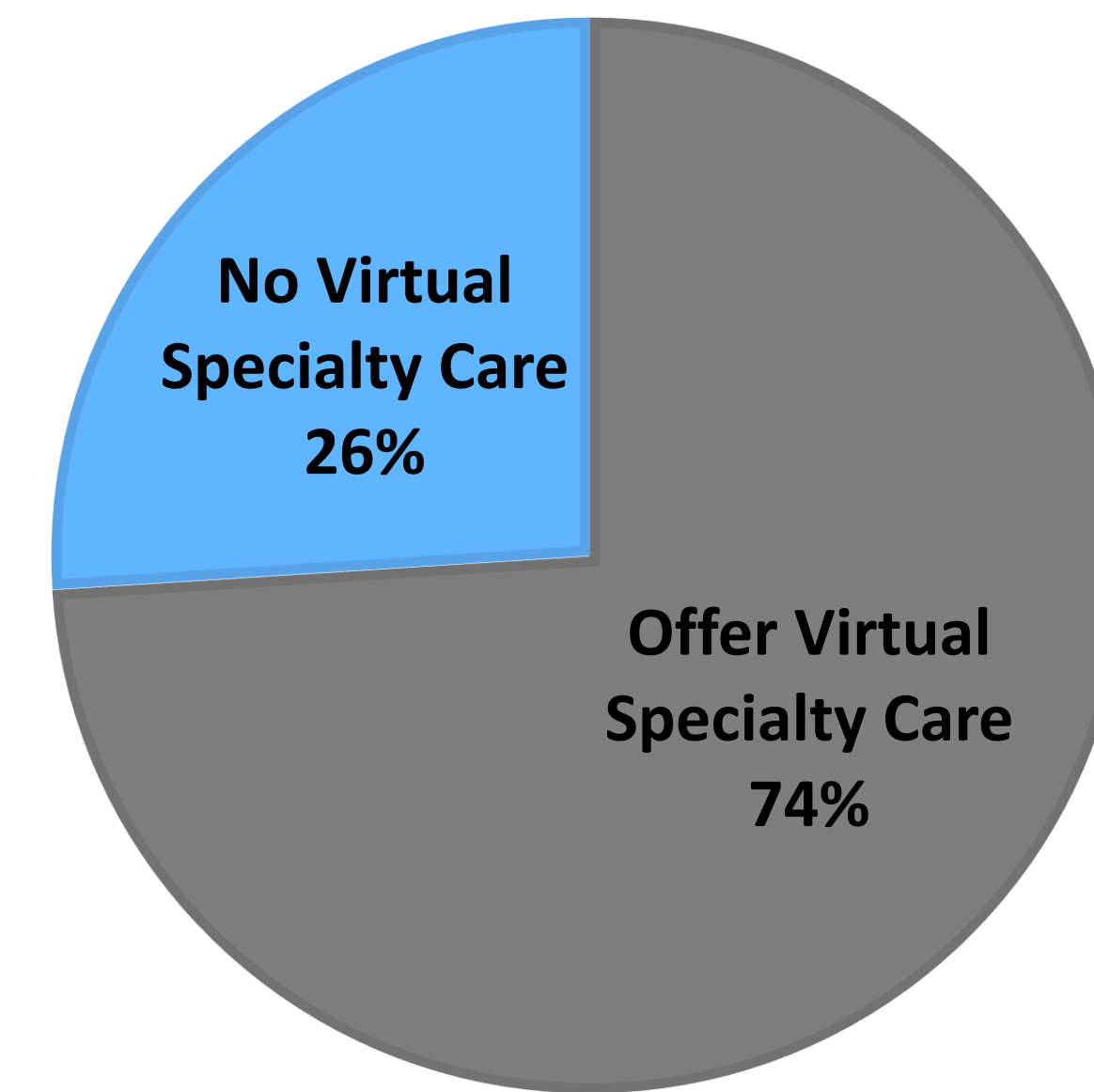
### RELATED LITERATURE

- Nguyen et al. (2022) highlight how remote monitoring tools like telemedicine and apps can reduce healthcare utilization for chronic conditions like IBD, even if they don't always improve quality of life metrics.
- De Angel et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of consistent design and transparent communication when integrating digital tools—key for building trust in Virtual Specialty Care platforms.
- Siderius et al. (2023) call for ethical, multilingual, and interoperable pediatric digital care systems, reinforcing the need for inclusive design when building virtual services.

### HOSPITALS OFFERING VIRTUAL SPECIALTY CARE

■ Offer Virtual Specialty Care ■ No Virtual Specialty Care

35 Top Hospitals Analyzed



### MATERIALS & METHODS

- To better understand how Virtual Specialty Care is communicated to patients and families, I conducted a comparative analysis of 39 U.S. hospital systems, focusing on virtual specialty care providers.
- Website Selection and Review  
Hospitals were chosen based on size, specialty scope, and digital presence. Both general pediatric hospitals and niche specialty systems were included to ensure a wide sample.
- Data Collection  
A standardized Excel tracker was made to collect data across several key categories:
  - Availability of Virtual Specialty Care
  - Types of specialties offered virtually
  - Access requirements (portal login)
  - Pricing visibility and estimates
  - Language support and multilingual resources
  - Booking flow and user interface structure
- Qualitative and Quantitative Evaluation  
Each hospital's virtual care web presence was evaluated for usability, clarity of information, and ease of scheduling. Observations were recorded using both quantitative counts (number of hospitals offering pricing) and qualitative notes (strengths of navigation).
- Visual Analysis and Benchmarking  
Screenshots of sample landing pages, booking portals, and FAQs were collected and compared to highlight user experience patterns. Hospitals were ranked informally based on transparency, inclusivity, and accessibility.
- Synthesis and Reporting  
Key findings were summarized into themes and trends, which were then translated into a PowerPoint deck to visually present the results and support future strategic planning.

### RESULTS

- 29 out of 39 hospitals (74%) provide Virtual Specialty Care in at least one specialty area
- Top specialties included Neurology (6), Dermatology (5), Gastroenterology (4), and Urology (3)
- Only 18% of hospitals share pricing online; the majority (82%) require insurance verification, patient login, or direct phone contact
- 90% restrict virtual visits to in-state patients due to licensing regulations
- Multilingual support was present in only 31% of website. Spanish was most common, followed by Arabic and Chinese

### CONCLUSIONS

The research revealed meaningful gaps in virtual care accessibility and communication. Although a majority of hospitals offer some virtual specialty services, patients often face hidden costs, limited out-of-state options, or unclear instructions on how to access care.

The most effective systems emphasized clarity, they offered visible pricing, multilingual content, and streamlined booking without login barriers.

### REFERENCES

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