

## Supply of traditional and virtual home visits: The role of general practitioners

*A nested study within the Swiss Sentinel Surveillance System (Sentinella)*

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### 1. Background and relevance

General practitioners (GPs) have traditionally provided home visits to patients who are chronically ill, need palliative medicine, require post-acute treatment follow-up, or are in an emergency. Particularly patients with chronic conditions benefit from GPs' home visits because of functional limitations to travel to the GP's office. However, home visits by GPs are on the decline across Europe. In view of this gap between rising needs and declining supplies, it will be important to develop a sustainable model of traditional and new forms of home visits. "Virtual" home visits by telemedical consultations are coming up.

There is a lack of knowledge about the traditional and virtual visits that are provided, their availability in urban and rural areas, patients' characteristics and policy implications.

### 2. Aims and objectives

We aim to provide

- a typology of GPs' current home visits in terms of
  - visited patients with chronic conditions
  - characteristics of home visits
  - GPs who do home visits
- an overview of GPs' current virtual visits

### 3. Methods

#### Data collection (2018/2019)

Quantitative analysis nested in the prospective Swiss Sentinel Surveillance System (Sentinella), consisting of a representative, nationwide sample of GPs.

#### *Part A: longitudinal*

Every GP documents his/her home visits. Collected data will include information on patient population (age; gender; chronic conditions), characteristics of visits (regular/urgent/emergency visits; in-/out-of-hours service; own patient/public emergency service; length of transfer to patient; length of consultation; patients located at home or in institutions; reason for home vs. practice visit; suspected problem before visit; actual problem; general situation of patient; patient hospitalization) and repeated visits within the study period.

#### *Part B: cross-sectional*

A questionnaire survey with general questions (frequency of visits to own patients and in public emergency service; necessity of visits; motivation and barriers for visits) and questions on virtual visits (phone calls; text messages; image transfer; video communication) was distributed once.

#### Data analysis (2019/2020)

Master students in Health Science at the University of Lucerne will analyze the data.