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# Booking data shows outpatient has all but stopped

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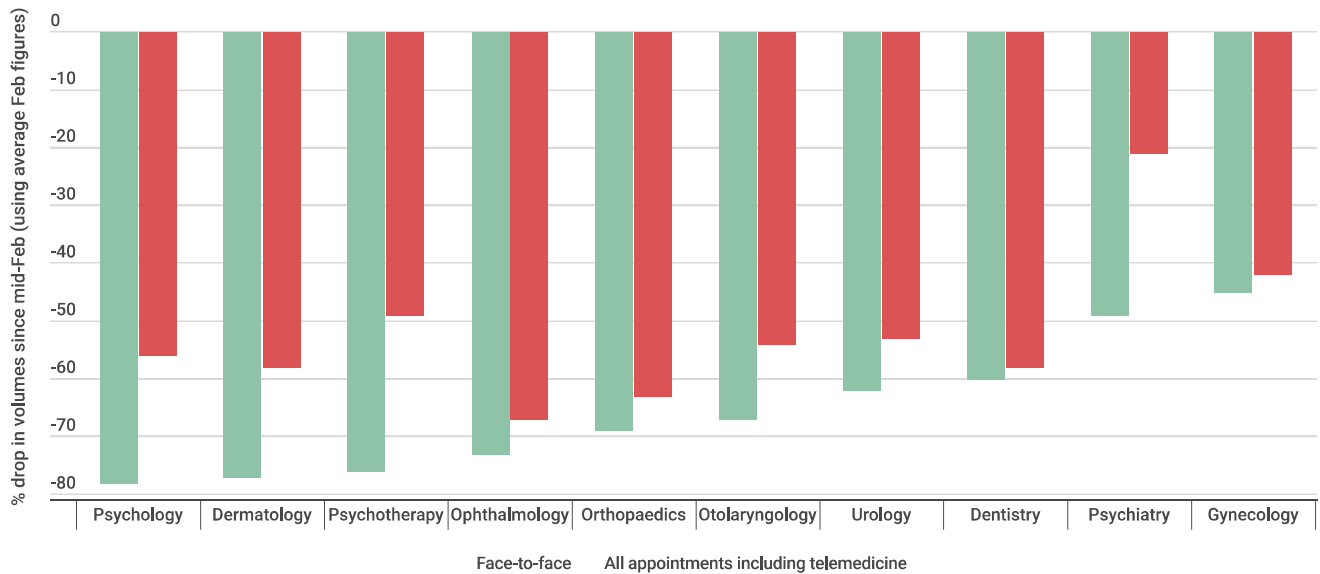
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Patient footfall for outpatient care across the world has all but stopped. Exclusive data from DocPlanner shows which specialities have seen the biggest drop in appointments booked and where telemedicine is really picking up some of the slack. We assess this against outpatient volumes in Singapore during SARS to see when it might pick up.

Big drops in face-to-face appointments come from psychology, dermatology and psychotherapy but these are also specialisms that have been cushioned by telemedicine. Although pan-global booking platform DocPlanner penetration is nowhere near 100%, the data gives a good indication of how outpatient volumes are falling across the globe. It processes around 1.5m appointments a month and has 2m doctors actively using the platform.

## % drop in booking volumes across all of DocPlanner's markets since mid-Feb

All of DocPlanner's main specialities have seen huge drops in bookings for its top ten specialities in face-to-face and telemedicine appointments. Data incorporates Spain, Italy, Poland, Mexico, Brazil and Turkey.



c. HBI 2020. Source: DocPlanner.

The data shows as a percentage how much volumes on appointment bookings has dropped since February – using mid-Feb average figures – in DocPlanner’s top ten specialities and across all of its markets. Following on from this period, DocPlanner’s CFO Peter Bialo tells HBI: “We’re seeing a recovering in the number of bookings because telemedicine is growing but the face-to-face consultations have really stabilised over the past couple of weeks as practices have been closed.”

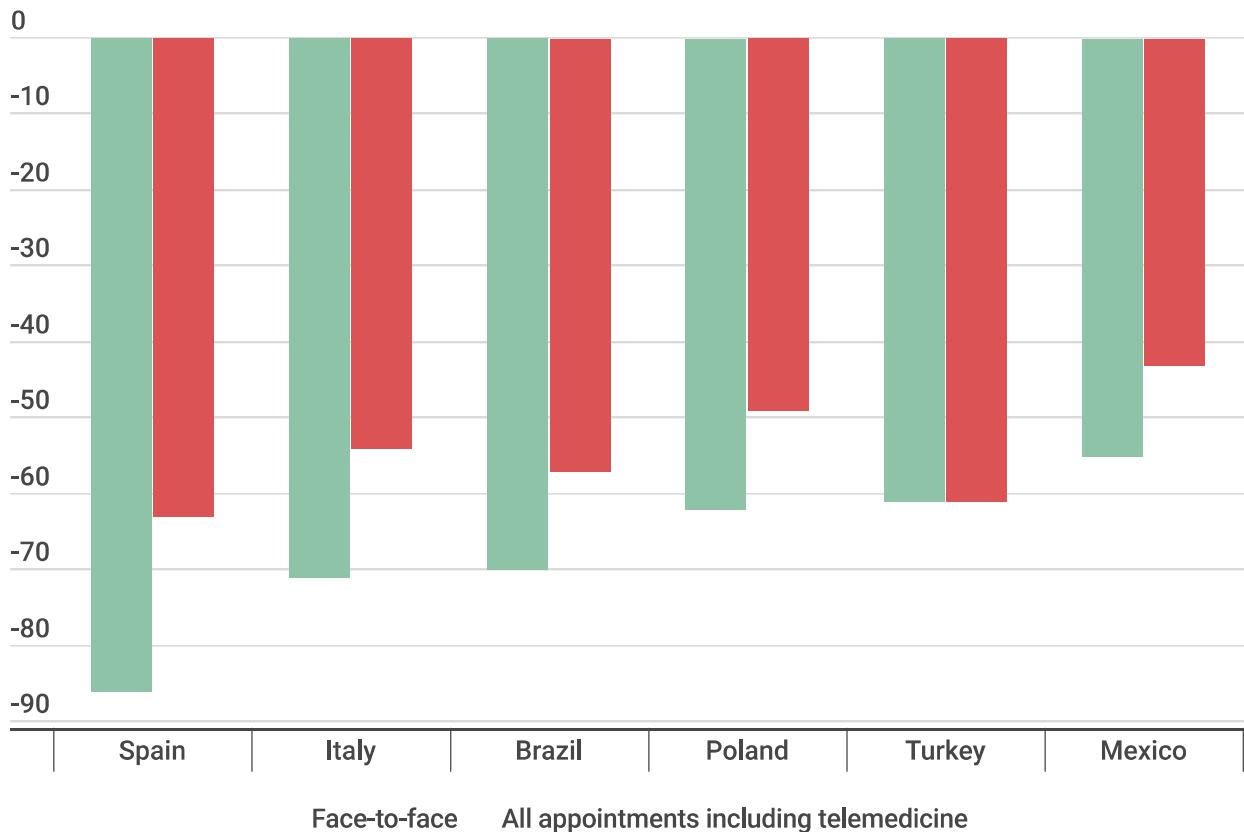
“Offline will come back but some of the specialisms will stay in the telemedicine space. If you look at before and after the crisis, I estimate that face-to-face bookings will probably be down 20-30% of what they were before the crisis but this decrease, however, will be more than made up by remote consultations and all together post-virus appointment volumes should end up at ~110% of pre-virus volumes.”

Many of Europe’s largest outpatient groups like Medicover and Terveystalo have heeded profit warnings following drops of between 50-75% in elective treatment volume. More specialised groups, in ophthalmology and dentistry, [have used state-backed measures to temporarily lay-off](#) most of their workforce.

Despite DocPlanner only launching the telemedicine tool within the past few weeks, tens of thousands of its doctors have already adopted the solution even though the markets are considered further behind technology adoption than the UK and the US. Like most telehealth groups, DocPlanner is offering the solution for free and may monetise this afterwards.

The LATAM markets are DocPlanner’s most recent and therefore have smaller penetrations than the European markets so may give a less clear indication of falling volumes in that market. “Spain and Italy have been most hit, again quite understandably, and have also seen most improvement coming from telemedicine, Bialo says.

## The drop in volumes across all specialities in each market



c. HBI 2020. Source: DocPlanner

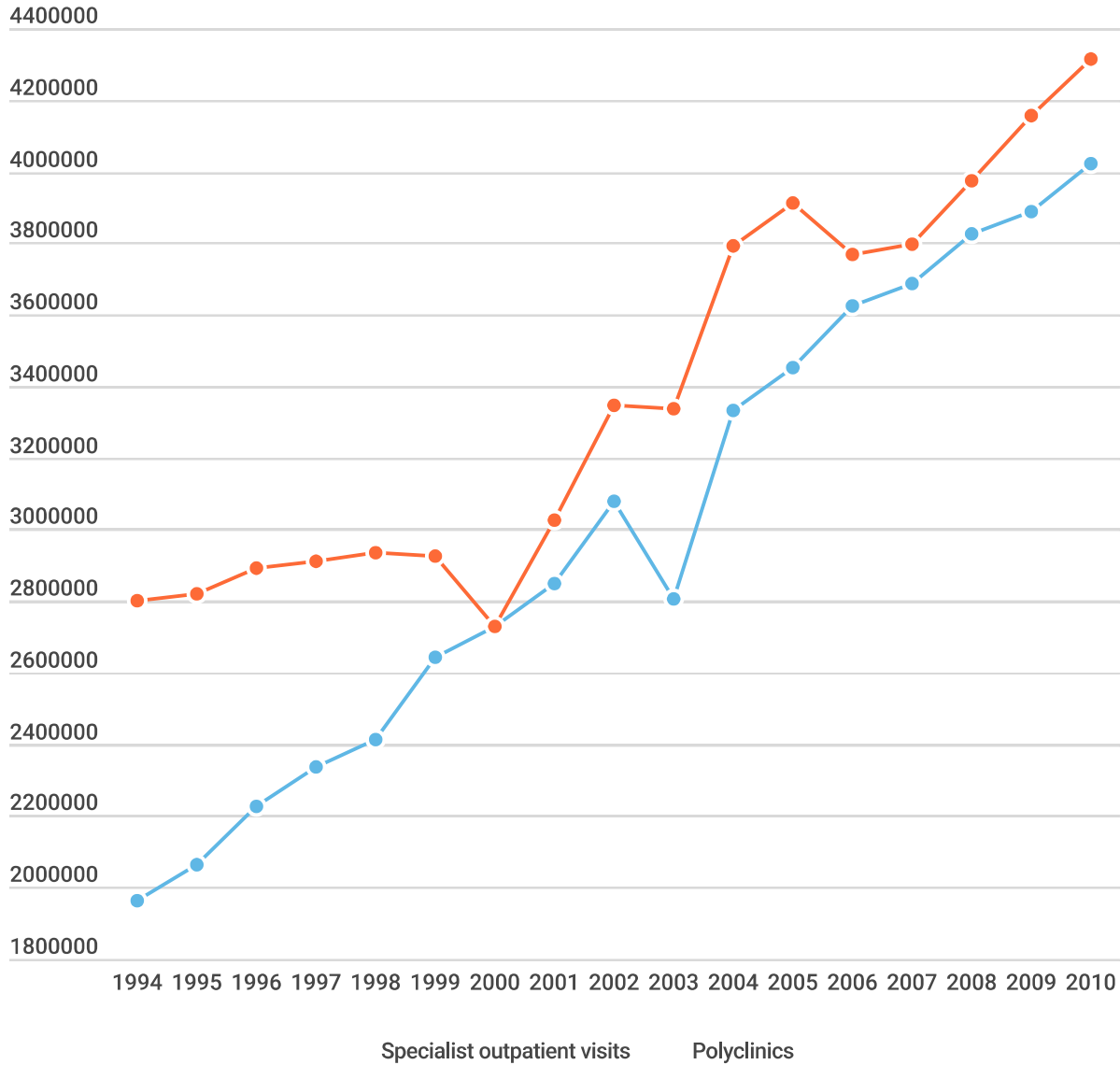
Bialo admits that DocPlanner is seeing pressure in the current climate as doctors and other specialists subscribed to the platform look for ways to save cash. “Quite a few of our members are struggling to maintain their clinics, it’s in our interests to try and keep as many as possible afloat so we’re trying to be quite flexible, especially where more physical care is needed.”

While outpatient volumes are staying down at present, data from Singapore and Toronto in the period before and after the SARS crisis show that lost elective procedure “were recouped”, according to an analysis from UBS, matching Bialo’s assessment that the volumes will increase post-virus.

“In Singapore during the SARS outbreak, 2003 hospital outpatient admissions (elective proxy) declined by 10%; however in 2004 volumes grew by more than 2x the historical run rate,” it says, adding that the hardest hits months saw a 30-40% drop in volumes.

“We do not expect coronavirus to be demand-destructive, as delayed procedures and revenues are likely be recouped in 2021. In Singapore following the SARS crisis, procedure growth in 2004 was more than double the historical rate, suggesting most delayed 2003 procedures took place alongside the normal underlying growth.”

# Outpatient recovery after SARS 2002-03 in Singapore



c.HBI2020. Source: data.gov.sg

We would welcome your thoughts on this story. Email your views to [Rachel Lewis](mailto:Rachel.Lewis@hbi.com) or call 0207 183 3779.



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