Healthcare Provider’s Experience with Telemedicine during COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

✔ Although telemedicine has been around for the last four decades, many healthcare providers (HCPs) are not familiar with its use.
✔ The rise of COVID-19 pandemic has thrust HCPs to adopt telemedicine instead of the conventional office visit in order to provide ongoing care for their patients.
✔ Many HCPs were tested on their technological literacy and conformability.
✔ This was further compounded by not only the technological literacy of patients, but their internet accessibility as 1 in 4 Kentucky households do not have access to broadband internet.
✔ With these apparent challenges, our study aimed not only to assess HCPs’ experience with using telemedicine during COVID-19, but also to identify its potential benefits for our highly morbid underserved patients.

Methods

✔ We conducted an online electronic survey for the Medical Center at Bowling Green HCPs.
✔ A total of 70 HCPs took the survey.
✔ The two most common primary practice types were private practice and academic hospital (37.5% each).

Results

✔ The majority (81.2%) have used telemedicine.
✔ The two most common specialties of respondents were primary care (28%) and cardiologists (12.5%).
✔ The majority (82.3%) of HCPs who used telemedicine during the pandemic indicated that they had never used it previously.
✔ Most HCPs (58.8%) generally agreed with the idea that telemedicine visits are more time efficient.
✔ Approximately 61% of HCPs said they will consider using telemedicine after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, and 33.3% will consider it in certain situations.
✔ Overall, HCPs rated their experience with telehealth a 3.90 on a scale of 1 to 5.
✔ When compared, there was no statistically significant difference between the cardiologist and non-cardiologist group.

Discussion

✔ Telemedicine was a quickly forced transition on HCPs and a large majority of them did not have much previous experience with it.
✔ However, the data we collected seems to indicate that HCPs largely had an above average experience with telemedicine and 94% indicated that they would consider using it in their practice after COVID-19 ended.
✔ Broadband connection remains elusive to many Kentucky households.
✔ In addition, the average time a patient must travel to-and-fro a doctor’s office in our rural underserved area is approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes.
✔ Therefore, telemedicine will be a reasonable option for follow up visits, laboratory results review and/or prescription refills.
✔ This will likely increase patient’s compliance and lead to resource conservation such as gas and travel time.

Practice description

Reported disadvantages associated with telemedicine use

Preferred telemedicine modality

Reasons for not using telemedicine

Overall experience with telemedicine use

References