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Title

Public Experiences and Perspectives of Virtual Primary Care Visits: Outcomes and Future Options

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Healthcare Services, Delivery, and Financing

Presenters

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Abstract

Context: A key change for the health care system has been the implementation of virtual care solutions by primary care providers in response to physical distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. The experiences of the public due to these changes require investigation. Objective: To explore public perspectives of the usability, acceptability and sustainability of virtual primary care visits and how virtual healthcare delivery can be improved. Design: Closed ended, self-administered online survey, co-created with a public advisory committee. Setting: A link to the survey was provided through primary care office visits and advertisements in local news media. Participants: Responses were received from 325 individuals who self-reported a virtual visit with their primary care provider. The range in age was from 19-80 years with 76% of respondents identifying as female. The majority (77%) were from urban communities with 30 minutes or less travel time (69%) to their primary care clinics. Outcome Measures: The survey consisted of 18 questions regarding perceptions of the virtual care visit experience, the outcomes of the visit, and feedback on how virtual visits might be sustained in future. Results: The virtual visits reported were primarily by telephone (98%) and used for a range of needs including follow-up for test results (36%), chronic conditions (32%) and seeking advice for a new health condition (32%). The virtual visit was reported to be helpful (90%), saved time (78%) and more convenient for access to care (66%). Among the respondents, 92% of the virtual visits were considered completed, with no follow up or follow up if needed. For future use, 67% reported they would like to have the option of ongoing phone or computer consultations while 27% were open to considering virtual visits for receiving test results, prescription renewal and follow up for a health problem. Future preferences are in-person (85%) or phone calls (78%) with one's provider in their usual clinic. Conclusion: During pandemic restrictions, the use of virtual care and primarily telephone consultations that bridged care for patients were well received. A number of considerations were identified for integrating into longer term use. This survey

was an effective means of obtaining public feedback, which is essential given that recipients of care are the ones most impacted by system changes.