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Title

Exploring the Telehealth Experiences of Service Users with Mental-Physical Multimorbidity during the COVID-19 pandemic

Priority 1 (Research Category)

Multimorbidity

Presenters

Matthew Menear, PhD, Savannah Dubé, MA

Abstract

Context

The COVID-19 pandemic led to significant transformations in health care delivery, notably in the shift towards telehealth. While previous studies have shed light on the benefits and challenges of the rapid shift to telehealth, few studies have explored the telehealth experiences of service users with coexisting mental and physical health conditions (i.e. mental-physical multimorbidity).

Objective

To explore the telehealth experiences of adults with mental-physical multimorbidity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Study design, population, data collection and analyses

We conducted a qualitative descriptive study involving 29 semi-structured interviews with adults living with mental-physical multimorbidity. Participants were asked about their experiences of care during the pandemic, including their positive and negative telehealth experiences. How telehealth influenced the accessibility, continuity, person-centredness and comprehensiveness was explored. Interview transcripts were analyzed using a mixed inductive-deductive thematic analysis approach to identify recurrent themes in participants' experiences. Analyses were supported by NVivo software and themes were discussed by an interdisciplinary team.

Setting

Quebec, Canada

Results

Findings suggest that most participants had both positive and negative care experiences with care delivered through telehealth. While telehealth maintained or improved access to certain types of care such as psychological or routine physical care, access to appropriate care for some physical health conditions remained limited. Telehealth also appeared to help maintain relational continuity between services users and their care providers throughout the pandemic. However, many participants shared negative experiences related to the person-centredness of care delivered via telehealth and fully comprehensive care was often difficult to achieve.

Conclusions

These findings shed light on areas that can be targeted for quality improvement to improve the telehealth experiences of individuals with mental-physical multimorbidity.

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