

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PATIENT SATISFACTION IN ADOLESCENT TELEHEALTH VISITS

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Background: Due to social isolation required during the COVID-19 pandemic, many practices made a sudden transition to telehealth with minimal preparation or training. Telehealth has been extensively studied in adults and shown to improve patient satisfaction in multiple settings with satisfactory clinical outcomes. However, the use of telehealth has been rarely studied in the adolescent and young adult population, where providers face unique challenges regarding consent and confidentiality. Though the field of Adolescent Medicine recognizes the importance of speaking with patients alone, it is difficult to establish confidentiality when conferencing with a patient over a telephone or video call. The purpose of this study is to compare patient satisfaction and visit confidentiality between telehealth and in person visits in adolescents and young adults.

Materials/Methods: Patients were recruited from a subspecialty adolescent medicine clinic, as well as from a system of free reproductive and primary care clinics with both school based and community sites. Data was gathered via anonymous survey sent via email, to patients seen both in person and via telehealth. Survey questions were modeled from the Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative Young Adult Health Care Survey and the University of Rochester Telemedicine and Non-Telemedicine Visit Experience Interview.

Results: Survey results were obtained from both the telehealth (n=46, 28% of respondents) and in person (n=116, 71.6% of respondents) populations. Age of respondents varied between age 13-25. Respondents were majority female (95% telehealth vs 93% in person). 97.8% of telehealth respondents reported that they were able to meet with their provider one on one, compared to 97.4% of in person visits (p>0.05). When asked to rank their provider on a scale of 10, ratings were not significantly different, with a higher proportion of telehealth respondents ranking their provider as a 9 or 10 out of 10. 83% telehealth respondents would recommend telemedicine to a friend, and 100% of these respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it was easy to communicate with their provider.

Conclusions: Adolescent and young adult patients perceive that confidentiality in telehealth visits is not significantly inferior to that of in-office visits and they generally have a positive evaluation of their telehealth experience. Future work should be done to evaluate best practices for how confidentiality is established and maintained in telehealth visits in this population.

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