Session 5: Telehealth and Vulnerable Populations

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS WHILE PROVIDING TELEHEALTH

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Important Disclaimer

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David T. Ford

• Vice President of Health Information Technology

• Re-joined CMA in March 2020 after five years running CalHIPSO, the largest federally-designated Regional Extension Center in the nation
COVID-19: How outpatient care has changed

- Patient-clinician interactions
  - Appointments: type, frequency, and access

Number of Visits per Day in Transition to Telehealth at One Primary Care Practice

Source: The authors
NEJM Catalyst (catalyst.nejm.org) © Massachusetts Medical Society
Mehrotra et al, 2020
Patient Visits by Age, Language, and Insurance Before and After Telemedicine Scale-Up

This chart shows the proportion of patient visits seen by age, language preference, and insurance type prior to (2/17–2/28/2020) and after (3/23–4/3/2020) scaled-up telemedicine implementation to address the Covid-19 pandemic at the UCSF General Internal Medicine Primary Care Practice (P=0.002 for age ≥65 and P<0.001 for other comparisons). A significantly smaller proportion of visits after scaled-up telemedicine implementation were with vulnerable patients.

Patient Visits by Race/Ethnicity Before and After Telemedicine Scale-Up

This chart shows the proportion of patient visits seen by patient race/ethnicity prior to (2/17–2/28/2020) and after (3/23–4/3/2020) scaled-up telemedicine implementation to address the Covid-19 pandemic at the UCSF General Internal Medicine Primary Care Practice (P=0.006 using chi-squared test). A smaller proportion of visits with vulnerable populations occurred after implementation.

Source: The authors
NEJM Catalyst (catalyst.nejm.org) © Massachusetts Medical Society
Digital Divide 1.0 - persists by age, income, education, community

% of US adults who use the Internet, by Income

- $30,000 - $49,999
- $50,000 - $74,999
- $75,000+

2019:
- 75,000+: 98%
- <30,000: 82%

Pew Research, 2019
Disparities in internet use by language

Percent saying they use the internet

Latino adults, by language dominance

- English dominant: 94, 87, 86
- Bilingual: 76
- Spanish dominant: 36, 74

2009 2012 2015

Pew Research, 2016
The Digital Divide in San Francisco

Internet Usage & Basic Digital Literacy

Overall
- Internet User & Basic Digital Literacy: 85%
- Internet User Only: 8%
- Non User: 6%

Latino
- Internet User & Basic Digital Literacy: 76%
- Internet User Only: 16%
- Non User: 8%

Non-English
- Internet User & Basic Digital Literacy: 63%
- Internet User Only: 26%
- Non User: 11%

65 & Older
- Internet User & Basic Digital Literacy: 60%
- Internet User Only: 17%
- Non User: 23%

<$25K
- Internet User & Basic Digital Literacy: 53%
- Internet User Only: 22%
- Non User: 25%


Basic Digital Literacy: online search, find website, send email, fill out online form
Key Take-Away Points

>75% of most populations use Internet. Disparities in Internet use less prominent

Disparities persist in home internet access/speed, smartphone ownership, and digital skills, particularly among certain groups (e.g. low-income older adults).

Non-white and low-income populations increasingly smartphone-dependent Internet users
Strategies
Technology Challenges

• Pre-Visit Technology Screening:

1. Device availability

*Especially if your telehealth platform is an app

2. Ask about home internet – Can it support streaming on multiple devices at once? What else is going on in the home – remote work? Distance learning?

3. Be aware of phone plan-related limitations – Limits on data plans, prepaid phones, etc.
Technology Challenges

• Offering phone visits

  1. **Be aware!** Medi-Cal has proposed to pay phone-only telehealth using a separate, presumably lower, fee schedule

  2. Pediatric challenges – engaging both the patient and the parents at the same time

  3. Lack of video can make it harder to learn about the patient’s living situation
Technology Challenges

• Empathy goes a long way!

1. Understand that technology challenges have only gotten worse during the pandemic
2. “Zoom Fatigue” is very, very real
3. Relentless positivity is the key!
Mitigate barriers to digital literacy & resources

Identify free & low-cost internet…

…and devices

Free & Low Cost Internet (NDIA)  
Lifeline  
PCs for People

SF Digital Equity Playbook: https://sfmohcd.org/digital-equity  
National Digital Inclusion Alliance: https://www.digitalinclusion.org/
Patient Populations – Limited English Proficiency
Patient Populations – Limited English Proficiency

• Patient checklist – available in multiple languages

• If the patient needs an interpreter
  ✓ Many telehealth platforms allow 3-way calling
  ✓ VRI – Video Remote Interpretation
  ✓ If a family member is going to interpret, make sure that person is available at the time of the visit

• COVID-19 Information: [https://covid19healthliteracyproject.com/#languages](https://covid19healthliteracyproject.com/#languages)
• Specialized patient checklists
  ✓ Help parents talk to children about telehealth

• Very important to be free of distractions
  ✓ Ask parents to turn off all other electronics (TV, iPad, etc.)

• Remember: Zoom fatigue is very real
  ✓ Distance learning has kids online all day
A longer version of today’s presentation is available on the CMA website:

- Telehealth Series for Small and Medium Sized Practices: (Pt. 4)
  Telehealth Strategies for Treating Vulnerable Patient Populations


(Presentation took place October 10, 2020. Available for download)
CMA Telehealth Resources

Available on the CMA Website

CMA Online Telehealth Resource Center

https://www.cmadocs.org/telehealth/resources

Topics include “Pediatric” and “Limited English Proficiency”
Next Telehealth Webinar

Webinar: Telehealth Town Hall
Thursday, April 8th
12:15-1:15pm
Information and registration:

Thank You