



Utilizing Telehealth for Contraceptive Care in Adolescent Patients: Provider and Staff Perspectives

Authors: Iris Huang, Lee Hasselbacher

Introduction

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, it became necessary for family planning providers to utilize telehealth in order to safely provide contraceptive counseling to patients. Telehealth, in the form of video or phone calls between provider and patient, had not previously been widely utilized for this purpose. As such, Ci3 researchers collaborated with Planned Parenthood of Illinois (PPIL) to conduct a study exploring provider and staff perceptions of the newly implemented telehealth for contraceptive counseling in clinics across Illinois, with analysis of a subset of data focused on the effects on the adolescent population in particular. Researchers interviewed 40 participants, including 20 participants from PPIL and 20 from other clinics providing family planning services from across Illinois. Participants included clinicians, clinician support staff, and administrative personnel.

Findings

Providers and staff expressed mixed feelings about using telehealth for contraceptive counseling with adolescents due to its impact on accessibility and confidentiality.

- Participants described how their adolescent patients' comfort with using technology translated to a convenient user experience when it came to telehealth.
- Access to contraceptive counseling was increased by the utilization of telehealth for adolescent patients who live physically far from clinics, including patients from rural areas or away at college.
- Telehealth allowed adolescent patients to complete appointments without parental knowledge by removing the need for parental help with logistical aspects of the appointment, such as transportation.
- Providers described challenges in ensuring patient confidentiality due to an inability to prevent others from being in the room with the adolescent while completing visits over telehealth.

Implications

Our research suggests that while telehealth has positively impacted accessibility for adolescents seeking contraceptive counseling, telehealth has also had mixed impact on patient confidentiality. As adolescents continue to require confidential contraceptive services without having a guarantee of at-home privacy for telehealth appointments, providers and clinics must find other ways to best preserve patient confidentiality if telehealth is to be utilized in the long term.

“[With] teens, a lot of times I’ve noticed that mom’s kind of hanging out in the background [...] no matter how many times you’re like ‘I kind of need some one on one time here’ [...] you don’t have any control in those situations.”

–Nurse practitioner at a family planning clinic in the Chicago suburbs

Contact

Please contact Lee Hasselbacher at lhasselbacher@bsd.uchicago.edu for more information about the study.

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