



“This has definitely opened the doors”: Provider perceptions of patient experiences with telemedicine for contraception in Illinois

Authors: Bonnie Song, Angel Bowlware, Zarina Jaffer Wong, Iris Huang, Amy K. Whitaker, Lee Hasselbacher, Debra Stulberg

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 (PPIIL) to conduct a study exploring provider and staff perceptions. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the rollout of telemedicine in healthcare, particularly in family planning. Before the pandemic, digital solutions were emerging as a mode of reproductive healthcare delivery, with studies showing high levels of patient and provider satisfaction with telemedicine for services such as medication abortion and prenatal care. However, more research was needed to understand provider perspectives on the rapid implementation of telemedicine and effects on patient care.

Published in the journal *Contraception*, researchers from The University of Chicago and Planned Parenthood of Illinois conducted a study to explore provider perspectives on telemedicine delivery of contraception. Researchers interviewed 40 obstetrics-gynecology and family medicine physicians, midwives, nurse practitioners, and support staff providing contraception via telemedicine in practices across Illinois, including Planned Parenthood of Illinois (PPIIL) health centers. Researchers analyzed interview content to identify themes around the perceived impact of telemedicine implementation on contraception access, contraceptive counseling, patient privacy, and provision of long-acting reversible contraception (LARC).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 PPIIL and 20 from other clinics providing family planning services from across Illinois. Participants included clinicians, clinician support staff, and administrative personnel.

Findings

- Researchers found that participants perceived telemedicine implementation had improved care by increasing contraception access, increasing focus on counseling while reducing bias, and allowing easier method switching.
- Participants’ perceptions of how telemedicine implementation impacts patient privacy and LARC provision were mixed. Some participants found telemedicine implementation enhanced privacy, while others felt unable to ensure privacy in a virtual space.
- Participants found telemedicine modalities useful for counseling patients considering methods of LARC, but they sometimes presented an unnecessary extra step for those sure about receiving one at a practice offering same day insertion.

Implications

Our research suggests the need to integrate LARC care with telemedicine workflows, improve patient privacy protections, and promote equitable access to all telemedicine modalities.

[full article available here](#)

Contact

For more information, please contact Lee Hasselbacher at lhasselbacher@uchicago.edu

Download [the full Ci3 brief here](#)