Telemedicine and Older Adults: The Experience Pre- and Mid-Pandemic

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Agenda

- Intro
- Telemedicine definition
- Pre-, post-, mid- pandemic definitions
- Policy and procedure
- Process and procedure
- Population
- Findings
- Implications
Since the beginning of COVID, access to medical care has been impacted.

Telemedicine has been put in place as a potential solution.

Many older adults may face challenges using telemedicine, resulting in a barrier to access necessary healthcare.

Understanding the complexities of their experience is vital to serving the populations with the greatest needs.

Lam et al., 2020
Telemedicine is the use of electronic devices (cell phone, home phone, computer with web cam, laptop, etc.) to connect with health care professionals.
Pandemic Timeline

- Pre-Pandemic: March 2020
- Mid-Pandemic: April 2022 (Present)
- Post-Pandemic: Future
Process and Procedure

- 17 interviews were conducted with UPMC program participants
- Participants were asked about their history using telemedicine services prior to the onset of COVID-19 and during the pandemic.
- Interviews were recorded using VoiceMemos on an iPhone
- Interviews were transcribed and analyzed for recurring themes and comments
POPULATION

- Adults age 65 and older
- Local senior high-rise residents or community center members
- Living in the greater Pittsburgh area
- 17 participants: 5 men, 12 women
FINDINGS

Out of 17 participants...

- 3 used telemedicine prior to COVID-19
- 8 used telemedicine during COVID-19
- 16 preferred in-person visits
  - Of these, 4 would agree to telemedicine if necessary
- 1 preferred telemedicine visits
WHY DO THEY PREFER IN-PERSON VISITS?
COMFORT

"I am able to express myself more clearly in person and feel like I am treated with more dignity." (paraphrased)

CONVENIENCE

"Usually when I'm in her office, if she wants me to get a blood test, I can get it right there."

CONNECTION

"I want to look at their face to see if they telling me the truth."
WHAT IS **MISSING** FROM TELE-HEALTH VISITS?
EASE OF USE
"Technology doesn't work like it's supposed to"

TIME
"Tele-medicine feels rushed"

RAPPORT
"Tele-health is not as intimate"
Why should we try to improve telemedicine?

- High level of resistance to the use of telemedicine among older adults, though reasons vary
- Telemedicine is not going away
- In some circumstances, telemedicine may be the only avenue for access to specialized or emergency services

Bhatia et al., 2022; Hollander & Carr, 2020
How can we improve telemedicine for older adults?

- Digital literacy training
- Access to technology and devices
- Access to assistance

Telemedicine in the Time of Coronavirus
- Calton et al., 2020

Connecting with Older Adults via Telemedicine
- Nieman & Oh, 2020


QUESTIONS?
THANK YOU

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