

Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic public health officials sought out different options to limit the spread of the disease and continue providing the much-needed care that patients deserved. Telemedicine became one of the leading initiatives to assist in caring for patients while limiting potential exposures. Prior to the pandemic telemedicine was primarily utilized in the psychology and neurology settings. The loss of life during the pandemic was unimaginable additionally, many healthcare entities began to suffer from lack of protective supplies. Due to the unknown and newly implemented stay at home mandates made throughout the country many people became fearful of COVID-19 which led to an inundation of no-shows and missed appointments in the primary care setting. As the pandemic continues missed appointments seem to parallel its trend. The benefits of telemedicine implementation in relation to reducing missed appointments has yet to be thoroughly examined. This project aims to explore the impact of telemedicine implementation in a primary care clinic in Pensacola, Florida.

The goal of the project is to measure patient satisfaction and evaluate the effect of telemedicine on missed appointments.

Methods

In a primary care clinic located in Pensacola, Florida a prospective patient survey was conducted during the months of May-July 2022.

The patients seen during the above time period was evaluated either traditionally by and in-person office visit or by telemedicine. A subsequent patient survey was conducted on consenting individuals. The survey aimed to assess patient satisfaction and the probability of participating in a telemedicine encounter in the future.

Results

- The missed appointment rate for telemedicine was (8%) which was statistically lower than traditional in-office missed appointment rates of (28%) during the months of May – July 2022 ($p < 0.0001$).
- Individuals who participated in the post-encounter survey through traditional in-office visits ($n=39$) and telemedicine ($n=72$) reported satisfaction. Telemedicine patients recommended telemedicine encounters at (90.3%) while individuals that participated in conventional meetings recommended in-office visits at (100%).
- Telemedicine visits offer increased access to care with nearly identical satisfaction per patient survey compared to traditional in-office visits. Continued offerings of both in-office and telemedicine encounters is beneficial to patients and providers.

Survey

Survey Questioning
Convenience of Appointment
Easiness of appointment set-up
Provider Engagement
Felt Needs were met
Felt safer in the home setting
Felt safer in the office setting
Recommend telemedicine encounters
Time waiting in telemedicine/ in-office waiting room

Conclusions

Overall, telemedicine encounters demonstrated comparable results to in-office visits concerning patient satisfaction and provider engagement. There was a significantly significant reduction in missed appointments when compared to pre-pandemic rates as well as in-office only rates.

The resultant data demonstrated and supported continued utilization and further implementation of telemedicine into practice.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interest

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