

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY FOR OLDER ADULT PARTICIPATION IN TELEHEALTH VISITS

G.A. Hudgins, S. Ostertag,
Montana Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program,
University of Montana, Missoula Montana

L. Roers,
RiverStone Health Clinic, Billings Montana



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BACKGROUND

- RiverStone Health (RSH), a FQHC, is a community health center located in Billings, MT, with three rural satellite clinics.
 - Based in the Yellowstone City-County Health Department
 - Full service clinic serving 20,000 patients a year
 - Home of the Montana Family Medicine Residency, Eastern Montana Area Health Education Center
- The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated initiation of telehealth visits between patients and providers for the safety and convenience of both parties.
- RSH had not performed telehealth visits prior to spring 2020.
- As the pandemic developed, a needs assessment was performed to determine the interest and needs of older adult patients to engage in telehealth.

METHODS

- RSH identified 1,140 patients age 65 or older, 817 (72%) in the main clinic and 323 (28%) in rural clinics.
- A 13-question survey was devised with a goal of completing it with 300 patients by phone in fall 2020.
- 716 calls produced 303 completed surveys, 257 (85%) from the main clinic and 46 (15%) from rural clinics.
- Six individuals made calls, recording the responses in a data base.
- Questions included
 - interest in telehealth
 - capability to participate
 - need for training and equipment
 - interest in Zoom sessions for education and socialization

RESULTS

- Ten percent of patients surveyed had completed a telehealth visit and 41% were interested in doing so.
- Capability to participate in a visit included having internet access (35%) and either a computer (25%) or an iPad (29%).
- While 20% had participated in communication via an electronic platform (Skype, FaceTime or Zoom), 18% felt they would need training to participate in telehealth visits.
- Similarly, 18% indicated that they had someone to assist with such as visit, but 14% thought a close family member would need training.
- Approximately 14% were interested in the loan of an iPad.
- Interest in Zoom sessions for socialization (14%) and education (17%) was also determined.

CONCLUSIONS

- The percentages obtained in this survey were extrapolated to the 1,140 clinic patients age 65 and older.
 - Almost 500 clinic patients would be interested in a telehealth visit.
 - Up to 160 patients would need the loan of an iPad.
- When a patient indicates interest in a telehealth visit and needs an equipment loan, this information is noted in the EMR for future visits.
- With funding from the CARES Act, RSH has been able to purchase 10 iPads and develop a process for distribution as well as an infection control procedure for cleaning them between uses.
- When a visit is scheduled, the Geriatric Educator and the Zoom tech equip the patient with an iPad and teach him/her to use it.
- The Zoom champion takes the patient through a practice session prior to the appointment.
- The day of the appointment, the Zoom tech gets the patient started on Zoom and hands him/her off to the Medical Assistant for the visit.
- RSH is also planning to follow up with those patients interested in Zoom sessions for education or socialization.