

Survey of Psychiatric Patient Response to Telemedicine During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

The pandemic due to COVID-19 has impacted the social dynamics of society today. Those with mental illnesses are vulnerable to experience exacerbation of symptoms during times of stress, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, due to their reliance on their social support network. There has been an increase in loneliness and isolation. Numerous reports show an increase in the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and substance use across the demographic spectrum since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (4). As a result, the prevalence of Telehealth has positively increased in correlation as well with respect to prevalence. At Oregon Health & Science University, the number of digital health visits increased significantly from 1,100 in February to nearly 13,000 in March, 2020 (1).

Telemedicine is a patient-physician exchange system which allows access for distant healthcare services. Telephone, video-conferencing and Internet are all methods which are encompassed by the term telemedicine. In recent decades mental and behavioral disorders have been the fifth costly group of diseases in the U.S., proving its impact on the well-being of the population as a whole. As such, telemental health care can provide an effective and adaptable solution to the access of care of mental illnesses universally. While being comparable to in-person services, telemental health care is particularly advantageous through the use of current technologies and adaptable designs, especially in isolated communities (2).

Client Satisfaction Questionnaire is a survey designed to assess level of satisfaction with care. Items are scored on a Likert scale from 1 (low satisfaction) to 4 (high satisfaction) with specific descriptors for each response point. Total scores range from 8 to 32, with higher scores indicating greater satisfaction. The CSQ-8 has been found to have high internal consistency and concurrent validity in mental health outpatient settings (3).

The aim of this study is to explore responses to use of telemedicine for psychiatric patients in two Metro Detroit adult outpatient clinics to determine patient satisfaction with telemedicine care during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Client Satisfaction Questionnaire was used to measure level of satisfaction with Telehealth care provided.

Methods

There were 200 participants anticipated, a total of 64 patients participated in this study. The length of the study was one year. Literature search was used to review data on patient satisfaction regarding the use of telemedicine. A modified Client Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ-8) was used to measure patient's sentimental response to telemedicine during the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of the patient encounter (see Figure 1). Items were scored on a Likert scale from 1 (low satisfaction) to 4 (high satisfaction) with specific descriptors for each response. The range was 8 to 32; higher scores indicating greater patient satisfaction. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to quantify patients' satisfaction levels with telemedicine via Microsoft excel QI Macros.

Results

Most patients had a positive response to telepsychiatry services. Ninety-seven percent of patient report that they received "excellent" or "good" quality of care. All patients (100%) reported the care received met their needs. The results of this study indicate that telemedicine was positively received by patients. As it is certain there will be an increased demand for remote medical services in the future, these preliminary results provide a baseline to inform system improvements leading to high quality[A1], streamlined psychiatric telemedicine care.

Descriptive Statistics

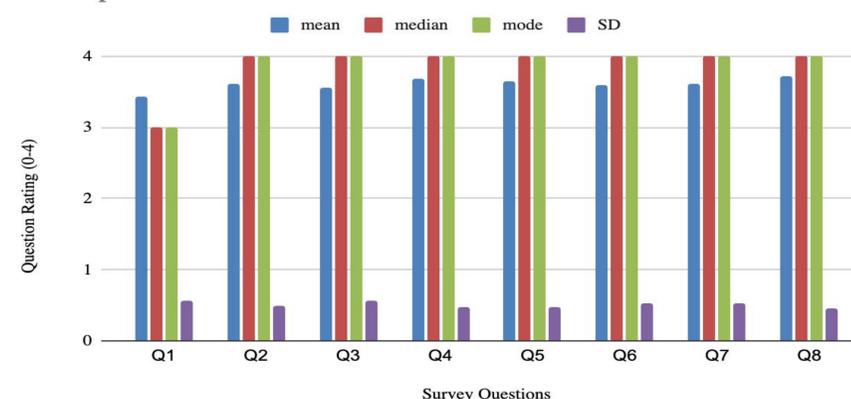


Figure 1

Client Satisfaction Questionnaire 8 (CSQ-8)

Patient answers the questions on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being the worst and 4 being the best

1. How would you rate the quality of the service you received?
2. Did you get the kind of service you wanted?
3. To what extent has our program met your needs?
4. If a friend were in need of similar help, would you recommend our program to them?
5. How satisfied are you with the amount of help received?
6. Have the services you received helped you to deal more effectively with problems?
7. Overall, or in a general sense, how satisfied are you with the services you've received?
8. If you were to seek this kind of help again, would you come back to this program for help?

References

"Satisfaction and experience with a supervised home-based real-time videoconferencing telerehabilitation exercise program in people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease". LING LING Y. TSAI, BAPPSC, RENAE J. MCNAMARA PHD, SARAH M. DENNIS, PHD, CHLOE MODDEL, BACH, JENNIFER A. ALISON, PHD., DAVID K. MCKENZIE, PHD, ZOE J. MCKEOUGH, PHD

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Discussion

During the COVID pandemic, the ability and safety for seeing patients face to face has never been so restrictive. Telehealth services have conversely been at their highest usage rate since the inception. The aim of this study was to explore the response to the use of telemedicine for psychiatric patients, using two Metro Detroit adult outpatient clinics, in order to determine patient satisfaction with telemedicine care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Psychiatry residents working in both facilities conducted the surveys. The initial hypothesis stated that there would be a greater than 50% satisfaction with telehealth services due to the current nature of society with the increased risk with face to face contact. The patient demographic contained adult psychiatric patients, age 18 and older. Only patients who had the capacity to consent to and were functionally competent enough to understand and complete the verbal survey were used. The level of satisfaction was measured via a standardized questionnaire, the Client Satisfaction Questionnaire-8, that was slightly modified to cater to the themes of this specific study. After the data collection was complete, a total of 64 surveys were counted. Of these surveys, the results showed the vast majority of patients had a positive response to the questions regarding the patient's approval for using telepsychiatry services. The answers for most questions were 3s and 4s, indicating a satisfaction level of "most satisfied" to "very satisfied" respectively. A 2 was answered for a grand total of 6 questions from separate patients. Overall the data suggests a very positive reception to the use of telehealth services.

In 2016 a research paper was published with similar parameters to this study, called "Satisfaction and experience with a supervised home-based real-time videoconferencing telerehabilitation exercise program in people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease". The study followed patients using telerehabilitation services for a course of 8 weeks. After the conclusion of the study, the publishers reported a "high satisfaction and positive interaction experiences as well as positive health benefits and convenience" (5). Another study which rated the impact of using telemental health on the therapeutic alliance, not only patients but their therapists as well. The study showed an overall positive satisfaction rating from the patients. However, the therapists had a negative rating overall. The speculation provided by the researchers for why this may be is possibly due to a feeling of constraint with the behavior the therapist perceives they must have while on camera (6).

One limitation of this study was the fact that each patient has had variable length of experience regarding the employment of psychiatric services. Another limitation is the fact that most of the patients have used telepsychiatry for a short period of time thus far, mainly since the inception of the pandemic. Also, it is unknown if the amount of time spent using telepsychiatry has an effect on the level of satisfaction in a long term sense.

Conclusion

The novel Covid-19 pandemic has infringed on the way healthcare professionals and patients interact and engage with to receive psychiatric care. The results of the study determine that telemedicine has positively increased in prevalence and correlation due to the increased demand for remote medical services during the covid 19 pandemic. Future long term study regarding patient satisfaction with telemental services may shed light on the impact that the length of time may have on the overall satisfaction of patients using telehealth services. Overall the data suggests a very positive reception to the use of telehealth services.

Acknowledgement

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