The Future of Telehealth for Cancer Care

Cancer Policy Roundtable
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Project Goals

1. Obtain direction from cancer patients and survivors about how to maximize the benefits of telemedicine

2. Obtain feedback from cancer providers to support, or offer refinements/counterpoints

3. Create resources:
   • Toolkit for oncology practices on how to address patient barriers and increase the effectiveness of telemedicine visits
   • Toolkit for patients and families on how to prepare for telemedicine visits

4. Develop and disseminate policy recommendations from a patient perspective, and engage in policy advocacy
Project Methods: *Rapid, pragmatic design*

- Steering Committee convened with responsibilities including:
  - Refine project approach and findings
  - Rapidly identify diverse focus group members
- Focus group guide developed and tested
- Focus group members recruited
- Six virtual focus groups convened
  - 5 using video, 1 audio only
  - 3-7 participants per focus group
  - Facilitated and recorded
- Themes identified across focus group transcriptions
  - Summary on subsequent slides
- Theme review with Steering Committee
- Structured survey of oncology providers
Main Findings

• Telehealth has filled a critical gap for cancer care services during the Covid-19 pandemic

  • “...the quality of the interaction between the doctor and the patient is not the same....”

• Additional planning is required to ensure that telehealth is maximally beneficial, and to avoid unintended consequences
Top Level Insights

• Oncology clinicians need to plan the visit types and scenarios that they consider appropriate for telehealth.

• In-person visits are also needed for relationship building and reassurance.

• Clear strategies and communication tools are needed to ensure successful telehealth visits that promote access to quality healthcare rather than exacerbate disparities.

• Oncology clinicians need more training and familiarity with their telehealth platforms and better processes to prepare patients and caregivers for these appointments.
Top Level Insights (2)

• Patients need more transparency and predictability related to the out-of-pocket costs for telehealth

• Telehealth should be offered and covered to replace some cancer-related care in a way that is based on patient preference, provides access to care team members, reflects carefully planned timing and availability of services related to telehealth, and presents test results in a more timely manner

• Telehealth might be a mechanism to remove barriers and catalyze innovation in cancer care
Provider Recommendations

• Ensure patient agreement that a telehealth visit is acceptable, balancing safety concerns with patient needs, recognizing that some patients prefer in-person visits

• Send a telehealth visit reminder by text, email, or phone call and ensure receipt of reminder

• Complete follow-up by providing a visit summary and scheduling next appointment, if appropriate

• Consider costs of telehealth for patients before making selections about visit types, and provide transparency and predictability for costs, if known

• Strengthen your video bedside manner
Summary: Future Potential

• Telehealth should be offered and covered to replace some cancer-related health care
  • Based on patient preference
  • Offering access to care team members, not only oncologists/APPs
  • Timing and availability of services (e.g., tests and scans) related to telemedicine visits must be planned

• Telehealth can be a mechanism to remove barriers and catalyze innovation in cancer care
  • For example, in promoting multidisciplinary care planning; care coordination; second opinions; clinical trial participation; supportive care services; support groups
For Additional Information...

https://canceradvocacy.org/telehealth/
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