

## CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

# The implementation of a virtual care program for rehabilitation in a community context

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### ***Introduction***

Telehealth, or virtual care (VC), includes the provision of healthcare using the telephone and/or videoconferencing and is an important service delivery method for healthcare providers working in the community. VC enhances access to services, promotes patient engagement and improves outcomes. However, healthcare providers can be hesitant to transition from face-to-face services to virtual care, based on inexperience using technology and concerns about patient safety.

### ***Short Description***

This paper presentation focuses on the implementation and evaluation of a homecare organization's rehabilitation VC program. This program required the development of multiple training and educational tools, as well as significant inter-departmental collaboration, to support rapid uptake of VC amongst the organization's occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech-language pathologists, dietitians and social workers. A survey was administered to SPs and patients to evaluate the perceived efficacy of VC, which informed changes to workflow, training, and patient support. Finally, patient interviews added depth to the survey findings.

### ***Aim and theory of change***

The aim of this paper presentation is to highlight the change management processes contributing to healthcare provider uptake of VC using the ADKAR model. This paper presentation will also highlight the findings from the client and clinician surveys, as well as the client interviews.

### ***Targeted population and stakeholders***

This program focused on the uptake and utilization of VC amongst the organization's healthcare providers. The targeted population for this presentation are program developers, educators and healthcare providers.

### ***Timeline***

This program was implemented in April 2020, with all rehabilitation service providers trained on the new VC platform by May 2020.

### ***Highlights***

The healthcare provider and patient survey suggested that telephone and videoconferencing were appropriate and effective tools to meet patient needs. Some healthcare providers expressed

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concerns about the effectiveness of communication over telephone and they reported feeling concerned about information security. However, patients reported they felt their information was secure and protected. Interviews with patients added depth to the survey results, highlighting that patients value the integration of VC in their care plan.

### ***Comments on sustainability***

The sustainability of this VC program relies on feedback from frontline healthcare providers, a commitment to client and family centered care, and the ongoing collaboration between departments.

### ***Comments on transfer-ability***

Findings from this VC program's implementation may be used to help other organizations hoping to enhance healthcare provider uptake for other medical professions and/or in other healthcare sectors.

### ***Conclusions***

VC can facilitate patient and family engagement, as well as access to healthcare. VC is a safe and effective service delivery option for rehabilitation providers working in the community.

### ***Discussions***

This presentation will conclude with a description of how the evaluation results informed ongoing modifications to sustain the rehab VC program.

### ***Lessons learned***

Stakeholder engagement and departmental collaboration was essential to the success of this program. Maintaining an open dialogue with frontline healthcare providers also ensured that meaningful changes were implemented to support workflow efficiency and patient safety.