
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT**Virtual Mentorship and Consults: Integrating Quality Patient Care in the Home**

1st North American Conference on Integrated Care, Toronto, 4 - 7 October 2021

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Introduction

CarePartners, a home care provider that offers a “full basket” of services cross Ontario, launched a pilot in February 2020 to understand the effectiveness of virtual care tools for home and community care patients. CarePartners Connect is a secure, electronic, communication platform that allows patients and families to communicate remotely with their provider in real-time, allowing for virtual consults, follow-up and monitoring. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated CarePartners’ deployment and broadened the scope to all Registered Health Professionals in the organization. The solution ensures that patients continue to receive high quality and timely clinical care, while minimizing in-person contact.

Aims Objectives Theory or Methods

With a rapid deployment to over 500 front-line home and community care providers in three months, providers were challenged with embedding virtual care within their practice and workflows. To help drive adoption, the program focused on developing a virtual mentorship and consult model that maximizes the benefit of virtual care, through widening the connections with a broader team while a provider is supporting a patient in their home. Through these virtual partnerships and consults, front-line staff working in a dispersed environment would further benefit from coaching and mentorship, ultimately improving quality and better integrating patient care.

Highlights or Results or Key Findings

Results from the last six months shows:

- Steady levels of adoption and uptake with therapists for direct patient care and for virtual care conferences that integrate the broader care team at the patient bedside
- Limited adoption with nurses and personal support managers direct with patients
- Virtual mentorship and consult visits emerged organically through providers using the technology to connect with internal colleagues or external partners to support integrated patient care. With dedicated full-time efforts in supporting change management initiatives and driving adoption at the local level, front-line staff have more readily adopted this virtual model.

- It is anticipated that continued focus on a virtual mentorship and consult model will help providers gain more experience using the technology with colleagues, which in turn will build confidence in scheduling virtual visits directly with patients.

CarePartners continues to monitor virtual care volumes, including virtual mentorship and consult visits, on a bi-weekly basis.

Conclusions

CarePartners' experience implementing a virtual mentorship and consult model highlights the importance of focused attention on adoption that includes building provider confidence in applying the technology, but also knowing when a virtual visit makes best sense. Continuous engagement with frontline clinicians is key to creating opportunities for virtual integration.

Implications for applicability/transferability sustainability and limitations

CarePartners sees continued opportunities to leverage virtual care to integrate care at transition points or to support warm handoffs across sectors; to support equitable access for harder to reach areas; and gain efficiencies to build additional capacity in the system.