CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Connected COVID Care: Comprehensive and equitable access to the care and support patients want

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

Tania Carlyle[1], Melissa Chang

1: UHN, Canada

Introduction

Connected COVID Care is an integrated care initiative co-developed by partners from public health, government, acute, primary, home and community care. Led by University Health Network (UHN) the initiative leverages virtual and home-based care to support equitable access to care and social supports.

Seamless care and support is delivered including to those living with complex/chronic conditions and those facing structural disadvantages. Approximately 20,000 patients have benefited in being cared for at home while maintaining timely access to acute care when needed.

Aims Objectives Theory or Methods

A gap in care was identified early in the pandemic as patients were presenting in emergency departments (EDs) unnecessarily or were without access to needed care. This presented an opportunity to create an innovative virtual and home-based model linking acute care specialties, home and community care, rehabilitation and psychosocial supports. The provision of secondary assessment tools to remotely monitor patients' oxygen saturation allows for remote monitoring in the home.

Highlights or Results or Key Findings

Multi-disciplinary collaboration has been the hallmark of Connected COVID Care from the outset, providing care to UHN patients as well as the broader regional community, including high-risk populations. Building capability and capacity quickly was possible by using the full scope and skillset of a diverse group of practitioners as well as patients and their caregivers.

Connected COVID Care is filling a gap for COVID patients, reducing anxiety and decreasing ED visits and readmissions. Approximately 20,000 patients have benefited while also saving more than 1,180 unnecessary ED visits and preventing a minimum of 542 inpatient bed days in one year. Other highlights:

• Compliments public health efforts with timely follow-up on results, self-isolation protocols, education for self-management

- Patient anxiety and self-care are improved with timely access and continuity of care

- Robust supports for social determinant needs (e.g. housing, food programs, financial assistance)

- Better patient outcomes from more comprehensive care and timely follow-up"

Conclusions

Connected COVID Care is filling a gap for COVID patients, reducing anxiety and decreasing ED visits and readmissions. Having a diversity of opinions, expertise, and lived experience around the table led to greater creativity, innovation, critical analysis, and strength of solutions where they are most needed.

Implications for applicability/transferability sustainability and limitations

Lessons learned will inform other innovations in virtual patient care. COVID has pushed a lot of healthcare into the modern era and digitized it while also bringing communities together in shared purpose. Future plans include maintaining processes and infrastructure established to support other surges in care, such as flu season.