Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

Telehealth's Impact on Teen Care During COVID-19 in 200 Words

Adolescent Health & Well-Being

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As COVID-19 challenges how clinicians care for patients, we, along with our Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Division of Adolescent Medicine colleagues, have responded to these changes with rapid implementation of telehealth for adolescents.

In a new study, we highlight the outcomes from our telehealth program's first 30 days. We were able to provide care for nearly 300 patients from five states for a variety of issues including eating disorders, reproductive health, gender-affirming care, HIV treatment and substance abuse.

While there were no real differences in visit completion rates based on gender or insurance, we found that non-White patients were significantly more likely to miss their telehealth appointments than White patients. Unfortunately, further analysis of racial inequities was limited because our electronic health record system does not consistently capture self-reported patient race.

Our data show that technology-based innovations like telehealth can transform adolescent health care delivery. However, it is critical to address how these innovations may both improve and/or exacerbate the effects of structural racism and resulting health inequities. To start, we need data collection that accurately captures demographic factors like race/ethnicity and gender identity in order to measure impacts of telehealth for marginalized populations who experience inequalities in all types of care due to factors such as racism and transphobia.

By investing in reimbursement, implementation research and rigorous outcomes assessments, payors, health care systems and clinicians can make telehealth an essential tool in improving health care access for all adolescents.

This post is part of our "____ in 200 Words" series. In this series, we tackle issues related to children's health policy and explain and connect you to resources to help understand them further, all in 200 words. If you have any suggestions for a topic in this series, please send a note to PolicyLab's Strategic Operations & Communications Director Lauren Walens.

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