

POSTER #14

The patient experience of rapidly increased use of virtual care visits during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Background: Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals and other providers were forced to significantly restrict visits to outpatient care and transition to virtual platforms over a matter of weeks. At Michael Garron Hospital, the internal medicine clinic used virtual care for all initial encounters during Covid-19. The effect of this abrupt change on the patient and caregiver experience is unknown and few studies exist on unselected patients with virtual care.

Objective: The aim of this study is examine the experience of general internal medicine out-patients required to use virtual care during Covid-19.

Methods: The last 60 patients with a virtual care appointment in the internal medicine clinic at Michael Garron Hospital were invited to participate in a mixed methods telephone survey developed by research and hospital patient experience/education staff with the help of patients and caregivers.

Results: Response rate of the survey was 45%; 85% of participants had a visit by phone and 15% by video. All patients were comfortable with sharing their information virtually and there were minimal concerns about A/V or privacy. While 97% of patients felt they had enough time with their provider, 25% felt they were limited in what they could show them. Despite this, there were many perceived benefits in saved personal resources.

Conclusion: Despite an abrupt and involuntary transition to virtual care, patients were comfortable with it and had an overall positive experience.