

Feasibility and Acceptability of Telepresence Robotic Visits to Care for Rural Dialysis Patients During COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

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Abstract Body:

BACKGROUND

Rural satellite dialysis centers provide life-sustaining renal replacement therapy, but geographical remoteness makes providing optimal care challenging. In the setting of the COVID-19 pandemic our limited nephrology service struggled to meet the regional demands of our communities.

AIM

We hypothesized that implementing robotic telepresence video (RTV) visits at our rural dialysis center would improve visit frequency, reduce provider travel, and be acceptable to patients.

METHODS

RTV Visits were performed using a self-driving, two-wheeled videoconferencing robot located at our rural dialysis facility in Elizabethtown, NY. One monthly in-person comprehensive dialysis visit was performed on each patient. During the rest of the month weekly RTV visits were conducted. Patient satisfaction was measured using a validated Telemedicine Satisfaction Questionnaire (TSQ).

Feasibility was measured by monthly visit count.

RESULTS

There were 22 patients on chronic hemodialysis from May through July of 2020. Patients with 4 provider visits increased from 59% in 2019 to 87.3% in 2020 using RTV program. Those with two or three visits dropped from 36.1% to 9.5% and one visit count decreased from 4.9% to 3.2%. Provider travel was reduced by 30 hours over 3 months. Seventeen patients completed the TSQ. The results demonstrated 100% overall satisfaction with the RTV program.

CONCLUSIONS

We are reporting the first use of remote telepresence robotic visits in a rural dialysis unit. Benefits included increased patient monthly encounters and reduced provider travel time. Overall, patients were satisfied with their care when supplemented by RTV visits.

Category:

HD

Group:

Adult

Topics:

Clinical Experience