Telehealth Follow-Up After General Surgery: What Do Patients Want?

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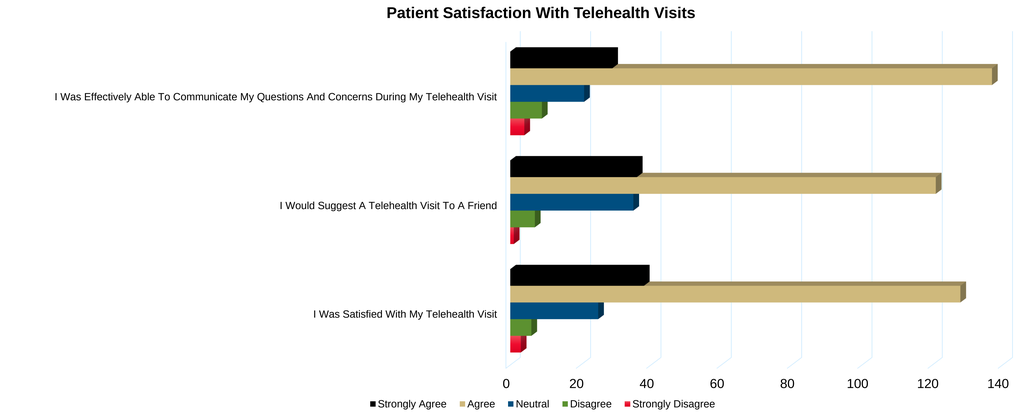
Background

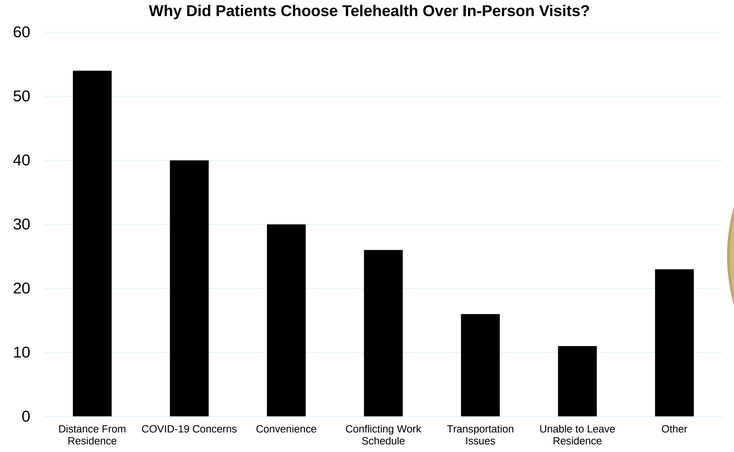
- Telehealth visits have recently emerged as an alternative approach to healthcare delivery
- In recognition of access to care disparities, especially in rural communities, and isolation requirements throughout the pandemic, telehealth utilization has significantly increased since 2020
- Previous studies demonstrate the safety of telehealth visits, but few evaluate the patient experience and satisfaction of these visits

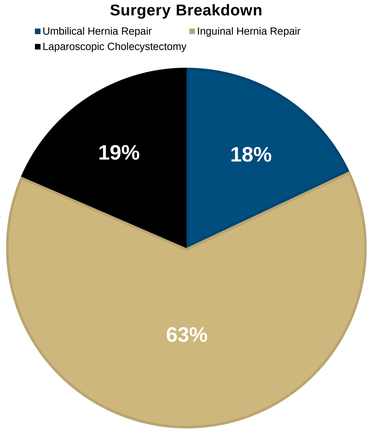
Methods

- Retrospective review conducted at a level 1A Veteran Affairs Medical Center from 2019 to 2021
- Patients underwent one of the following surgeries: umbilical hernia repair, inguinal hernia repair, or laparoscopic cholecystectomy
- Patients scheduled for a telehealth follow-up 2 weeks after surgery
- Patient satisfaction and determination of needs met during their telehealth post-operative visit judged on a 5-point Likert scale

Results







Conclusions

- Telehealth follow-up visits after common general surgery procedures were associated with a high patient satisfaction score (77%, agree/strongly agree) in a large, Veteran Affairs hospital system
- Many patients chose telehealth due to concerns regarding travel distance, COVID-19 concerns, and conflicting work scheduled
- Telehealth enhances health accessibility, aiding in reducing geographical barriers to care
- Telehealth should be considered as a primary option for patients after uncomplicated general surgery procedures

Implications

- Telehealth visits can reduce transit time, stress, and barriers to receiving post-operative surgical care
- Telehealth can be a useful tool especially in rural areas or large tertiary centers providing care for multiple surrounding states

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