

The experiences of residential aged care facilities using telehealth during COVID-19?

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1 Introduction

Australia’s response to COVID-19 has prevented widespread infection rates in the community. The majority of COVID-19 deaths have occurred within residential aged care facilities. Telehealth can be used to provide care and reduced transmission risks.

2 Objective

This study sought to understand telehealth’s use during COVID-19 restrictions and how adoption can be improved in aged care facilities

3 Methodology

Using a convenience sample we conducted semi-structured interviews with 19 residential aged care managers and senior clinical staff. Interviews were recording and transcribed.

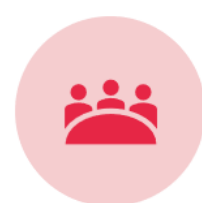
4 Analysis

We used the Telehealth Pathway Framework (1) to deductively analyse the data. Framework domains included service desing, technology, operations and adoption and outcomes

5 Results



19 facilities’ snr clinician/manager interviewed



Average 87 beds per facility



Phone was the most used device prior to COVID-19



Tablet use increased most during restrictions



Numerous software/platforms were used



Telehealth used for a wide range of consultations

All facilities reported an increase in digital device use for clinical care and social connection of residents with their families

Prior to restrictions 63% had little to no use of telehealth

“It was quite limited prior to Covid. We really did phone calls rather than [video] telehealth - so definitely there has been a huge change since COVID”

Challenges

Insufficient equipment

Poor Wi-Fi

Staff’s digital skills

Creating new workflows

Administering multiple appointments

Enablers

Wi-Fi Extenders

Tablet computers

Peer Training

Non clinical staff setting up video social calls

Persistence

6 Conclusion

- Despite long-standing barriers telehealth use increased during Covid-19 restrictions
- Digital devices used for clinical and social support.
- Telehealth can be effective for health care use

1. Agboola S, Hale TM, Masters C, Kvedar J, Jethwani K. “Real-world” practical evaluation strategies: a review of telehealth evaluation. JMIR Res Protoc. 2014;3(4):e75