Evaluation of Pediatric Rheumatology Telehealth Satisfaction During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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During the Coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic, ambulatory pediatric rheumatology healthcare rapidly transformed to a mainly telehealth model. However, pediatric patient and caregiver satisfaction with broadly deployed telehealth programs remains largely unknown. This study aimed to evaluate patient/caregiver satisfaction with telehealth and identify the factors associated with satisfaction in a generalizable sample of pediatric rheumatology patients. Patients with an initial telehealth video visit with a rheumatology provider between April and June 2020 were eligible. All patients/caregivers were sent a post-visit survey to assess a modified version of the Telehealth Usability Questionnaire (TUQ) and demographic and clinical characteristics. TUQ total and sub-scale (usefulness, ease of use, effectiveness, satisfaction) scores were calculated and classified as "positive" based on responses of "agree" or "strongly agree" on a 5-point Likert scale. Results were analyzed using standard descriptive statistics and Wilcoxon signed rank testing. The association between demographic and clinical characteristics with TUQ scores was assessed using univariate linear regression. 597 patients/caregivers met inclusion criteria, and the survey response rate was 42% (n = 248). Juvenile idiopathic arthritis was the most common diagnosis (33.5%). The majority of patients were diagnosed greater than 6 months previously (72.6%) and were prescribed chronic medications (59.7%). The median total TUQ score was 4 (IQR: 4-5) with positive responses in 81% of items. Of the subscales, usefulness scores were lowest (median: 4, $p < 0.001$). Telehealth saves time traveling was the highest median item score (median = 5, IQR: 4-5). Within subscales, items that scored significantly lower included convenience, providing for needs, seeing rheumatologist as well as in person, and being an acceptable way to receive rheumatology services (all $p < 0.001$). There were no significant demographic or clinical features associated with TUQ scores. Our results suggest telehealth is a promising mode of healthcare delivery for pediatric rheumatic diseases but also identifies opportunities for improvement. Innovation and research are needed to design a telehealth system that delivers high quality and safe care that improves healthcare outcomes. Since telehealth is a rapidly emerging form of pediatric rheumatology care, improved engagement and training of patients, caregivers, and providers may help improve the patient experience in the future.

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