

Virtual care: Connecting, empowering, and transforming surgical care

Opportunity Overview

In the preoperative period, the physician can evaluate possible candidates for surgery who are in rural or remote locations, without local access to a surgeon. Through real-time videoconferencing, physicians can witness and guide a physical exam, performed by the telemedicine coordinator at a remote site.

In the postoperative period, physicians can follow-up with patients and manage their care from a distance. This can become extremely useful for patients who do not live near the surgeon's practice or the health care facility where the operation was performed.

Business Need

One study on surgery patients found that for every 23-mile (37-km) increase in distance to the clinic, patients were 111% more likely to prefer remote follow-up. Patients were also happier interacting with their doctors remotely rather than being seen by other doctors and this also increased patient/physician rapport.¹

Outcomes are comparable between virtual care and in-person visits, and no difference in the rate of complications results from the use of virtual care.²

Benefits to System

- No-show rates were lower using virtual care, improving the efficiency of a system with limited medical resources, and surgeons using telemedicine consultations maintained a 97% diagnostic accuracy for pre-operative evaluations²
- Increased access for other patients into the clinic and this results in decreased utilization of other valuable resources such as staffing and space³
- Video visits can result in increased examination thoroughness⁴

Benefits to Patient

- Patients and providers reported high satisfaction and could clearly comprehend the benefit of incorporating virtual care into a postoperative care program²
- Patients who had follow-up appointments via video decreased personal costs, minimized travel time, decreased the need to take days off from work, have a person accompany them, or miss other responsibilities⁵
- The majority of patients have reported that these sessions were "just as good as clinic visits," and that they achieve good rapport with their physicians⁶

Benefits to Providers

A survey of physicians resulted in the following identified benefits:⁷

1. Increased access to / reach of surgical expertise:
 - A. Geographically

- B. Economically
- C. Temporally
- 2. Increased patient convenience
- 3. Optimize patient and family engagement
- 4. Increased physician efficiency
- 5. Potential to decrease health care costs
 - A. Patients/families
 - B. Hospital, hospital systems, and institutions
 - C. Payers
- 6. Standardization of care
- 7. Opportunity to optimize quality of care
- 8. Enable consistent monitoring and longitudinal data collection/follow up

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