Yukon Virtual Visits project: Physiotherapy at a distance – How to help without your hands

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Where we started

• Government of Yukon Home Care supports individuals living in communities across the territory

• Large geographic area, robust service delivery to rural and remote communities is an ongoing challenge

• Whitehorse-based Community Liaison Coordinators (CLCs) coordinate care and provide direct service physiotherapy and occupational therapy to clients, and supervise the rural Home Support Workers (HSWs)

• Government of Yukon Home Care partnered with the Territorial Health Investment Fund (THIF) team to trial the use of tablet technology to provide ‘virtual visits’ in addition to the regularly scheduled community visits
Goals

To investigate if Virtual Visits technology is able to support care delivery in Yukon’s rural and remote communities.

Intended outcomes for clients included:

• Improved therapeutic relationship, promoting social inclusion and reduced feelings of social isolation

• To explore how more regular contact with clients may support client self-management, treatment progression and avoid acute care interventions.
Yukon Virtual Visit Communities

Government of Yukon
Yukon Virtual Visit
Communities
What we did

• Participants provided with a tablet enabled with a video conferencing app connected via the cellular network
• Virtual Visits: scheduled & spontaneous, client & provider initiated
• Data gathered by an evaluator, using semi-structured interviews and surveys with CLCs, HSWs and clients involved in the Virtual Visits Trial
What we found - outcomes

Increased - Improved

Health status
Self-management
Self awareness of needs
Care coordination
HSW support
Access
Confidence

Decreased

Social isolation
Travel
Care giver burden
What we learned

• Connectivity
  • 35% of logged calls had documented technology issues

• User experience
  • all 6 survey respondents (4 clients and 2 HSWs) agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the technology
What we learned

• Technology
  • Software should be improved
  • Consider removing ‘lockdown’
  • Examine Wi-Fi in addition to cellular connectivity

• Design and Implementation
  • Dedicated tech support
  • Consider BYOD
  • Dedicated office space & detailed workplan
  • Planning to expand to other programs outside of Home Care
Clients

• “It is great, especially for couples. Because a lot of people don’t realize what caregivers go through. It really and truly is on the caregiver, and if the caregiver can talk to someone who understands what they're going through, that’s huge”

• “It’s nice to have the opportunity to speak and show results online”

• “I’m doing exercises that I never ever did. And I really hate walking! I’m just not a walking person”

• “It’s very good to have this service, but we need to use it more often”
Community Liaison Coordinators

• “The Client that I have been following has complex ongoing pain. Through virtual visits we’ve been able to have a regular exercise program that has been really effective for her. So she is more independent. Her function is much higher now than it was when we started virtual visits”

• “If it wasn’t for Virtual Visits, both of us feel it’s unlikely I would have known about her difficulty”

• “The home support workers I spend a bit more time with, but we’re getting more rich, robust information about the clients and it helps with the assessment. In the end, I think that leads to better care and we catch things early before they develop”
Home Support Workers

• “Most of the ones who would stay on virtual visits would be the ones who love to talk. Or who stay home quite a bit, who aren’t around a lot of people”

• “Even just talking with her, it was really good, instead of sending long emails, and then you forget something and have to go back and send another. It would be nice to do more, to try some reassessments or other stuff”

• “If you can take this to their house rather than having them come to the nursing station, they are more comfortable in their own home doing their exercises”
Next Steps

- Home Health Monitoring
- Virtual Visits
- Patient–Provider messaging

Remote Patient Care Expansion
Thank you

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Questions?

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