BACKGROUND

• Occupational therapy (OT) is a vital service supporting older adults' ability to age-in-place.
• Given barriers to accessing care, video telehealth (VT) is one means of providing OT services.
• Even within Veterans Health Administration (VHA), a pioneer in telehealth, VT by OT practitioners to serve older adults is not well-understood.

METHODS

• Utilizing an implementation framework, this study sought to understand VHA OT practice using video telehealth with older Veterans.
• A web-based national survey was conducted in September-October 2019
• Questions gathered usage of video telehealth to serve older Veterans, comfort with video telehealth to deliver specific OT services, and, for those using video telehealth, barriers, facilitators of change, and perceived benefits of video telehealth.

PERCEIVED COMFORT WITH VT FOR OT SERVICES

- Approximately 1 in 5 VHA OT practitioners (N=305, 22% response rate) participated.
- Most respondents were female, Master’s-educated OTs with <10 years of VA OT practice.
- Respondents were from 107 different VAs serving 33% rural Veterans.
- Less than half (41%) used VT with older Veterans. Users and non-users were similar by demographics.
- When asked to rate perceived comfort with VT for specific OT services, users expressed greater comfort than non-users, which was significant for 9/13 interventions, including ADLs, IADLs, and Home Safety.
- Over half (59.1%) of users reported >1 barrier, with “Inadequate space, physical locations and related equipment,” the most frequent.
- Most (74%) users reported >1 facilitator, with most frequent reflecting attitudes, e.g., belief that video would improve Veteran access (84%).

CONCLUSIONS

• Most VHA OTs respondents were not using VT with older Veterans in the fall of 2019
• Differences in perceived comfort suggests OT services may be more amenable to VT.
• This, coupled with primacy of respondent beliefs versus organizational factors as facilitators, underscores the need to gather clinician attitudes to understand how they are driving VT utilization to serve diverse populations.

REFERENCES


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