

Social Factors Did Not Impact Families' Acceptance of Telehealth in Early Pandemic

Pediatric Cardiac Virtual Visits are Accepted by Patients Regardless of Income, Language, and Insurance



WILMINGTON, Del. - Social, economic, and demographic factors that can influence health did not affect families' acceptance of telehealth for their children's cardiac care during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a study presented at the Pediatric Academic Society 2021 Virtual Meeting. The study, by research team members at the Nemours

Children's Health System, suggests that telehealth is a feasible tool for families regardless of household income, language, or insurance type.

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"When we saw that the use of telehealth would be necessary for maintaining children's cardiac care during COVID, we worried that some of our families would face barriers in using it," said lead author Carissa M. Baker-Smith, MD, MPH, director of Preventive Cardiology at Nemours. "We saw that these factors were not a barrier in families' choice to use telehealth and in fact may have been a welcome option."

A total of 849 pediatric patients were scheduled for cardiac visits at Nemours Cardiac Center, Wilmington, Del., between March 30 and May 8, 2020. When all non-urgent care was paused, families were given the option of using telehealth for their visit, or rescheduling the visit until a future date. The study team found that 52 percent agreed to telehealth visits, while 48 percent chose to reschedule. Patients with a primary diagnosis of abnormal heart rhythm, acquired heart disease, chest pain, dysautonomia/dizziness, and dyslipidemia, as well as families of children of Hispanic ethnicity were more likely to accept telehealth appointments. Families of older children, children scheduled for follow-up rather than new visits, and families who lived in Delaware, the same state as the care facility, were less likely to accept telehealth care.

Based on the high acceptance levels, the Cardiac Center has continued to offer telehealth for certain types of visits for easier access, even as in-person care has largely resumed.

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About Nemours Children's Health System

Nemours is an internationally recognized children's health system that owns and operates the Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children in Wilmington, Del., and Nemours Children's Hospital in Orlando, Fla., along with outpatient facilities in five states, delivering pediatric primary, specialty and urgent care. Nemours also powers the world's most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, KidsHealth.org and offers on-demand, online video patient visits through the Nemours App.

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