Clinicians' Online Neurology Network Empowering Communities through Telemedicine - Multiple Sclerosis (CONNECT-MS)

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Introduction

- California’s deserts and Central Coast are medically underserved areas for people living with multiple sclerosis.
- The National Multiple Sclerosis Society’s Southern California and Nevada Chapter estimated that there are many clients living with multiple sclerosis in geographic areas of highest need of specialized MS care:
  - Riverside County……………...1818
  - San Luis Obispo County…....…487
  - Bakersfield/Kern County….…...692
  - Visalia/Tulare County…...….….205

Objective

To develop and deliver a comprehensive telemedicine program for neurologists, primary care clinicians and patients that increases both providers’ and patients’ awareness of state-of-the-art care while creating quantifiable improvements in quality and coordination of care.

Methods

- Participating clinicians chose their preferred formats to receive continuing education including on-site training and online videos.
- Clinicians completed a pre-test to identify specific learning needs for MS care and demographics of their patients.
- The curriculum included early identification of MS, neurological examination, work-up, disease-modifying therapies, managing exacerbations, pediatric MS, progressive MS, and symptom management including exacerbations, mobility, bladder and bowel issues, depression and other comorbidities, and mistreatment of people with MS.
- Using HIPAA-compliant telemedicine software, a fellowship-trained neuroimmunologist offered remote consultations to neurologists for their most complex MS patients.
- We established a new telemedicine clinic for teenagers living with MS in Ventura County.

Results

- The project team provided:
  - 12 educational presentations
  - 39 telemedicine consultations
- Before and after participating in the MS education program, 17 clinicians completed a 24-item multiple-choice test of their medical knowledge about MS.

Conclusion

We established a comprehensive telemedicine network throughout the Central California Coast in collaboration with Ventura County Medical Center and the University of California, Riverside School of Medicine.

References

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