
Study Reveals Telemedicine Was Effective for Consulting on Surgeries



According to a study in the Journal of the American College of Surgeons, telemedicine may be as effective as face-to-face visits with regards to shared decision-making and communication for patients expecting first-time surgery.

There were previous concerns regarding whether physicians would be able to effectively communicate with patients remotely, but evidence shows patients are just as satisfied with telehealth visits as with face-to-face appointments.

The study hypothesized that telehealth appointments conducted via video would be less effective than in-person visits. The team evaluated the level of shared decision-making and quality of communication. These were measured by validated questionnaires and open-ended questions used to assess the satisfaction levels of patients and surgeons.

The study included 301 patients who had an in-person visit and 86 patients who underwent a telemedicine visit. Patients from both groups stated high levels of quality communication during their appointments. To account for various factors the analysis was adjusted, revealing levels of shared decision-making and quality of communication were similar between telehealth and face-to-face appointments.

Many patients who underwent remote appointments praised the convenience and usefulness of telehealth appointments. However, there were instances when telehealth visits were not appropriate, particularly when a physical examination was required. Several surgeons stated their preference for telemedicine to be used for follow-up care, so they can be given the opportunity to establish a relationship prior to a remote consultation.

Overall, the data generated from this study encourages surgeons to continue with telehealth appointments, especially as surgeons can now be confident that the quality of communication or shared decision-making will not be sacrificed.

The next stage for the research team will be to conduct more in-depth studies to identify a condition-by-condition guide outlining when it might be most appropriate to use telemedicine. For example, telemedicine seems to be a viable option for patients who need follow-up care for routine operations, whilst it should not be used where a physical exam is required.

Source: [American College of Surgeons](#)

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