



“If we are to continue to provide quality healthcare to our most underserved, we need to be able to do it in the most accessible manner possible and that means telehealth.”



Telehealth/virtual care is an essential tool, especially for our at-risk patient populations. It makes it easier for them to have access to the care that they need at the time they need it the most.

I had a patient who had always wanted to attend therapy sessions, however due to the nature of his work in construction he was always traveling throughout the Bay Area and there was no way for him to know if he would be nearby to make it to an appointment with me.

As the pandemic continued, his anxiety levels began to increase. However, thanks to the availability of telehealth, he was able to take the time he needed at his job site to make and keep his therapy appointments with me. The therapy sessions were so beneficial to him that it reduced his anxiety to a level where he no longer felt the need to continue his therapy.

Telehealth/virtual care needs to continue to be a permanent fixture in our health system. If we are to continue to provide quality healthcare through our community health centers to our most underserved, at-risk populations, then we need to be able to do it in the most accessible manner possible and that means telehealth.

MILA STUBENFIELD, PSYD
LICENSED PSYCHOLOGIST
NATIVE AMERICAN HEALTH CENTER

“Women need this service to stay safe and sane in these times.”



I feel grateful to be able to speak with women with telehealth connection as they juggle their healthcare needs and the responsibilities of being women during the COVID 19 pandemic. I speak with them while they are working, while they step outside on a patio as they oversee children’s school online, move pallets at their factories, do data entry remotely.

I have heard stories of incredible hardship and incredible courage. Working with women remotely to keep them safe and healthy during the COVID 19 pandemic has been a challenge and an honor. Women need this service to stay safe and sane in these times.

SUZANNE M. SEGER, MTS, CNM
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, WOMEN’S HEALTH
TIBURCIO VASQUEZ HEALTH CENTER



“Not only does telehealth and virtual care help in saving lives but it also aids in reducing unnecessary emergency room visits.



During a telehealth call with one of my regular patients, I noticed right away that she did not sound well. Within minutes she became unresponsive and using my other phone I called 911. I was finally able to illicit a response minutes before the first responders got to her door.

My patient was taken to a local hospital, where she was admitted to the ICU with a diagnosis of ketoacidosis. I called the hospital daily to check on her status, and after more than a week she was discharged home. My case manager was the first to speak with our patient and when she learned the patient had no memory of the events, filled her in about being on a telehealth visit with me, and my having called 911 when she became unresponsive. On my next telehealth visit with her a few days later, with great emotion, she thanked me for saving her life.

I know for a fact that had this been a routine in-person medical visit, and my patient was not feeling well, she would have been a no-show, something which occurs on a frequent basis with our patients usually due to their inability to arrange transportation to get to the clinic. That being the case, and as someone who lives alone, my patient would have lain in her home unresponsive without anyone knowing and her outcome would have been a completely different one.

Telehealth and virtual care need to continue to be a regular part of health services, not just during the pandemic, but beyond. It is a vital component to taking care of our most underserved and at-risk patients. Not only does telehealth and virtual care help in saving lives as exemplified above, but also aids in reducing unnecessary emergency room visits. This added level of care continues to make a positive impact on patient health and safety.

DENISE SCHOLZ, NURSE PRACTITIONER
LIFELONG OVER 60 HEALTH CENTER

“She has consistently been improving, and this would not be possible without telehealth (phone) visits.



I was able to work with a woman with anxiety. She had attempted to seek counseling services face-to-face in the past and did not continue after the first visit due to her symptoms. Additionally, her symptoms were impacting school, work, and her interactions with others.

She was able to engage with me via telehealth (phone). She is always prompt, consistent, and completed homework recommended for treatment. She has attended several sessions and now has begun attending school again, is more comfortable interacting with others and feels more confident about herself. She has consistently been improving, and this would not be possible without telehealth (phone) visits.

MADHUMITA BANERJEE, LCSW
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SPECIALIST II
TIBURCIO VASQUEZ HEALTH CENTER



“Telehealth visits have been a boon for these patients who now have increased access to medical care.”



As a Primary Care Provider I have seen the incidental benefit of Telehealth visits for our patients here in Union City. Our patients are among the most vulnerable in our community; some are insured by Medi-Cal and others are uninsured or only partially insured. Many are essential workers who have had continuous exposure to COVID 19 as they went out to do their jobs every day in the service of others. Our patients often work long hours and any breaks they have are regulated by law, not the generosity of their employers. They do not earn sick or personal leave, so they are not paid when not at work. Missing work for any reason can make them vulnerable to losing their jobs at the whim of their employers.

Telehealth visits have been a boon for these patients who now have increased access to medical care. Patients can squeeze in a visit on their morning or afternoon break without the additional time required for commuting, and they don't have to miss work. This makes them more likely to follow up and receive preventative care that they might not otherwise prioritize.

As a provider, Telehealth helps facilitate regular check-ins with patients who have uncontrolled chronic conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes. Patients know there is accountability and ease of use of health services. If something needs adjustment with a patient's treatment plan, I can intervene quickly and consistently until we manage the condition with success. Prior to Telehealth, patients were frequent no-shows due to the burdens of attending the clinic in person.

Telehealth also helps me to quickly triage emergent symptoms and send the patient directly to the Emergency Room when necessary. Conversely, it can save precious resources by giving me the opportunity to provide reassurance to worried patients, preventing unnecessary hospital visits when they are not indicated.

Providers and Patients alike love telehealth medicine. Telehealth supports a positive therapeutic relationship --- which evidence shows supports positive health outcomes. Now that more and more patients and healthcare providers have been vaccinated, we can welcome patients back to the clinic with open arms. In addition, we should retain the option of Telehealth for the simple reason that it benefits patients, providers and health systems by maximizing resources.”

VERONICA D. FERN, MSN, RN, FNP-BC
PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER
TIBURCIO VASQUEZ HEALTH CENTER