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The Impact of COVID 19 on High risk NICU Neurodevelopmental follow up clinic at an inner- city hospital in Brooklyn, NY

Introduction: In March 2020, as the world was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing restrictions posed an important challenge. Neurodevelopmental clinic follow-up plays a significant role in recognizing at risk babies who might benefit from early intervention. During the pandemic we implemented telemedicine to maintain continuity of care with our patients while still maintaining a safe environment.

Objective: This study aimed to determine attendance to clinic before and after pandemic with introduction of telemedicine as effective addition to in person follow up for children and families at Neurodevelopmental follow up clinic at University Hospital of Brooklyn.

Design/Methods: This study was a retrospective review of attendance to Neurodevelopmental follow up clinic at UHB prior and after COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 and 2020. We used Fisher's Exact test to compare patient's seen in the clinic (in person and/or via telemedicine), and missed appointments to determine the difference in follow up after the introduction of the virtual platform.

Results: In March 2020, we switched the clinic visits to a hybrid in -person and telemedicine follow-up model. We found increase in follow -up attendance from 53% in 2019 to 65.7% in 2020, of which 58.5% were telemedicine visits. In addition, there was decrease of missed appointments from 47% in 2019 of scheduled appointments to 33.9% in 2020 (P value is < 0.0001).

Conclusion: Telemedicine provides an effective alternative/addition to in person clinic visits during the pandemic. With telemedicine we were able to decrease significant number of missed appointments. Despite the overall number of patients seen in the clinic did not increase, due to prior pre-pandemic practice of overbooking, we were able to reach out easier to families in need. A combined approach of telemedicine and in person visits can be utilized to improve attendance, and provide continuity of care and support to children and families in Brooklyn.