• There is an opportunity for use of telemedicine in the benign breast clinic for routine post-operative visits.

• The major limitation seemed to be comfort with or access to computer technology.

• Patients interested in telemedicine were younger compared to patients who were uninterested.

NOTE: This study was conducted prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States during the spring of 2020 and offers a unique window into the feelings of patients regarding telemedicine prior to rapid increase in use of tele-health as a forced consequence of the pandemic when fears of infection may not have been quite so widespread.

Methods

• Women seen as new patients in the benign breast surgery clinic and scheduled for surgery in an urban hospital were identified.

• They were asked if they were interested in having their post-operative visit performed virtually versus a traditional in-office visit.

• Demographic information was collected.

• If women declined the virtual post-operative visit, they were questioned why.

• Data was collected when the virtual visits were completed.

• The differences in age and distance from the hospital between the group of women who declined telemedicine versus the group of women who expressed interest in telemedicine were analyzed using a one-tailed, unpaired T-test.

Results

• 12 women were identified that were seen as new patients and scheduled for surgery.

• 7 interested in telemedicine visits

• 2 completed the postoperative virtual visit

• Neither required an in-person visit

• Both were satisfied with their virtual visits

• 5 declined a telemedicine visit, reasons included:

• Not active on the patient portal

• Not comfortable using the computer

• No computer access

• Mean age was 55.3 years (range 24-77)

• Mean distance from the hospital was 10.0 miles (range 4.3-14.3)

• Table 1 represents the age and distance from the hospital comparison between patients interested and uninterested in completing a telemedicine visit.

Table 1. Age and distance from the hospital comparison between patients interested and uninterested in a telemedicine visit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interested in telemedicine (N = 7)</th>
<th>Uninterested in telemedicine (N = 5)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age, years</td>
<td>49.1 ± 12.9</td>
<td>64.0 ± 13.5</td>
<td>0.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance from the hospital, miles</td>
<td>10.8 ± 1.7</td>
<td>8.9 ± 4.2</td>
<td>0.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variables represented as mean ± standard deviation
* Indicates statistical significance (p<0.05)

References


