Sigma's 30th International Nursing Research Congress
Virtual Lactation Visits to Support Breastfeeding Mothers
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Purpose: To improve at home support for new mothers who are breastfeeding using virtual lactation consultant visits. Many facilities have in person or telephone support for new mothers who are breastfeeding. At times during a phone conversation it is difficult to determine whether a new mother needs to come for an in person visit for additional assistance. If an in person visit is needed, the mother has to transport her newborn to the hospital or the clinic. This can be a burden for many mothers and at times a virtual visit can decrease the need for the mother to travel.

Methods: Virtual lactation consultant visits were launched in two hospital systems with varying HIPAA secure technologies in 2017. Consultation with hospital administration on varying levels occurred prior to launch. Once policies and procedures were approved, training occurred with the lactation consultants and practice virtual visits were conducted prior to virtual visits with new mothers. Evaluation of the program includes satisfaction surveys from both the lactation consultants and the mothers seen by a virtual visit, qualitative interviews with lactation consultants and mothers, assessment of the mother’s breastfeeding status at 4 weeks and 3 months after discharge, and a technology survey to assess the ease or difficulty of use for the hospital staff and new mothers.

Results: Prior to training, lactation consultants at the academic health science hospital were not receptive to the program. After extensive training and onboarding support, the lactation consultants fully supported the program and providing virtual support for new mothers. Prior to implementation at the private hospital, they were conducting a few virtual visits periodically when women would call their phone lactation support line. To date, over 40 women have been provided virtual lactation support through the program. Data collection is going and results will be finalized spring of 2019. Preliminary results include lactation consultants and new mothers both used technical support services when there were issues with the technology or connectivity, the type of HIPAA secure technology used is not essential but training on the technology for lactation consultants and mothers is essential for success, both lactation consultants and mothers are very receptive to this innovative way to support lactating mothers, and the majority of mothers stated that they preferred this type of lactation support over phone-only support.

Conclusion: Integration of a secure audio and video connection to new mothers in their home allows mother to receive lactation support without traveling to the clinic or hospital. With proper training of lactation consultants and new mothers and readily available technical support help, both nurses and mothers readily adopt this technology to provide virtual lactation support.

Title:
Virtual Lactation Visits to Support Breastfeeding Mothers
**Keywords:**
breastfeeding, lactation and telehealth

**References:**

**Abstract Summary:**
Assistance with breastfeeding after birth can be a challenge for new mothers. Many facilities provide lactation support through telephone help lines. Integration of a secure audio and video connection to new mothers in their home allows mother to receive lactation support without traveling to the clinic or hospital.

**Content Outline:**
1. Discuss the need for virtual lactation visit to new mothers.
1. Background - need for breastfeeding support in rural settings,
2. lack of support for new breastfeeding mothers, and
3. the current landscape of in person breastfeeding support
2. Detail the standards, oversight, and policy surrounding virtual visits in the home.
1. Hospital policy consent documentation,
2. equipment/software needs, and
3. triage plan if additional support is needed near the new mother
3. Describe ways to incorporate virtual visits from various clinical settings.
1. Logistics for implementation,
2. training of lactation staff,
3. training of new mothers,
4. billing,
5. IT support for staff and mothers
First Primary Presenting Author

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Author Summary: Dr. Rhoads is a researcher and educator with a focus on rural health, maternal/infant health, and connected health technologies. She is a professor at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center in Memphis, TN. Dr. Rhoads has a passion for improving maternal, neonatal, and pediatric care in rural areas and several of her research and project grants have focused on the Mississippi River Delta region of the United States.

Any relevant financial relationships? Yes

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Signed on 11/19/2018 by Sarah Rhoads, PhD, DNP, WHNP-BC, FAAN