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Veterans' Preferences for Remote Management of Chronic Conditions.

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Abstract

BACKGROUND:

The Veterans Health Administration (VA) is investing considerable resources into providing remote management care to patients for disease prevention and management. Remote management includes online patient portals, e-mails between patients and providers, follow-up phone calls, and home health devices to monitor health status. However, little is known about patients' attitudes and preferences for this type of care. This qualitative study was conducted to better understand patient preferences for receiving remote care.

METHODS:

Ten focus groups were held comprising 77 patients with hypertension or tobacco use history at two VA medical centers. Discussion questions focused on experience with current VA remote management efforts and preferences for receiving additional care between outpatient visits.

RESULTS:

Most participants were receptive to remote management for referrals, appointment reminders, resource information, and motivational and emotional support between visits, but described challenges with some technological tools. Participants reported that remote management should be personalized and tailored to individual needs. They expressed preferences for frequency, scope, continuity of provider, and mode of communication between visits. Most participants were open to nonclinicians contacting them as long as they had direct connection to their medical team. Some participants expressed a preference for a licensed medical professional. All groups raised concerns around confidentiality and privacy of healthcare information. Female Veterans expressed a desire for gender-sensitive care and an interest in complementary and alternative medicine.

CONCLUSIONS:

The findings and specific recommendations from this study can improve existing remote management programs and inform the design of future efforts.