Overview of Issue

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disability characterized by challenges with social communication and restricted and repetitive behaviors/interests.
- The prevalence of ASD continues to increase, yet access to diagnostic assessment, intervention, and consultation does not meet this demand.
- In Wisconsin, ASD assessment and intervention services are largely provided face-to-face.
- Scarce resources in rural areas contribute to families not being able to access services or being required to travel long distances.
- This poster presents results of a literature review providing evidence that telehealth is a promising method of ASD service delivery for a range of services (assessment, intervention, consultation).

Advantages of Telehealth

- Telemedicine is the use of electronic communications and information technologies to provide clinical services when participants are at different locations.
- Telehealth is a broader application of technology for insurance coverage for services to be provided via telehealth.
- Several states have begun to approve the use of telehealth for ASD.

Telediagnosis and ASD in Wisconsin

- A critical barrier that remains in Wisconsin is the lack of insurance coverage for services to be provided via telehealth.
- Wisconsin has no bill ensuring parity.
- There is no bill stating that providers will be reimbursed for the same services provided via telehealth versus face-to-face.
- A Promising Step occurred in June 2018 when the Treatment Intervention Advisory Committee (TIAV) of Wisconsin determined that telehealth for behavioral intervention for ASD is a Level 2 treatment on an efficacy scale of Level 1 (Well Established) to Level 5 (Untested/Experimental).
- While this is an initial step, it remains that autism intervention and treatment are not currently covered services in Wisconsin when provided via telehealth.

Assessment

- Screening
- Diagnostic Assessments
- Functional Analyses
- Functional Behavioral Assessments
- Other (e.g. AAC assessment, preference assessment)

Intervention

- Individual Interventions
- Functional Behavioral Interventions
- Speech-Language and Occupational Therapy Interventions
- Telepsychiatry
- Group Interventions
- Parent Coaching/Training

Consultation

- Community Providers
- Schools
- Personnel

Next Steps

- Further research is needed to continue to establish the effectiveness of telehealth for ASD, particularly in the area of diagnostic assessments.
- A crucial next step will be to pursue insurance coverage for ASD services through telehealth, as well as parity of the services provided.
- Continue to explore the use of telehealth for consultation to build capacity with community providers in rural areas of Wisconsin.
- Additional efforts need to be undertaken (e.g. increasing the workforce through training) to address other barriers, such as long wait lists for care at specialty clinics.

Conclusion

- Telehealth is proposed as a way of helping individuals with ASD access assessment and intervention services, as well as providing a method for experts in ASD to provide consultation to community-based providers to build capacity in local communities.
- A recent review of the research on telehealth in ASD found the use of telehealth to be a promising method of service delivery.
- Across studies, users have consistently reported high levels of acceptability with ASD services being delivered via telehealth.
- While some states have approved the use of telehealth for service delivery in Wisconsin, ASD insurance specifically does not currently cover ASD diagnostic assessment or ASD intervention provided through telehealth.

References

6. Several states have begun to approve the use of telehealth for ASD.
7. The News Bureau of the University of Missouri recently shared a story (link below) regarding how Project ECHO has directly impacted the life of a Missouri family. The article shares how a family had to travel nearly 100 miles and wait 18 months after initially having concerns about potential ASD to receive a diagnosis for their son. When the family had similar concerns regarding their younger child, they were able to obtain a diagnosis in less than one month via telehealth.
8. A recent review of the research on telehealth in ASD found the use of telehealth to be a promising method of service delivery.
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