

**INTRO**

The COVID-19 pandemic created new barriers and challenges to accessing primary care services, particularly among older adults who already faced barriers related to access to care, including transportation, health literacy, and self-management support. Nova Southeastern University South Florida Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program (NSU SFGWEP) partnered with primary care clinics to conduct wellness calls to older adult patients identified through clinic EHR. The wellness calls' objectives were to 1) discuss COVID-19 protective measures; 2) assess wellness needs and access to care barriers; and 3) screen for telehealth support.

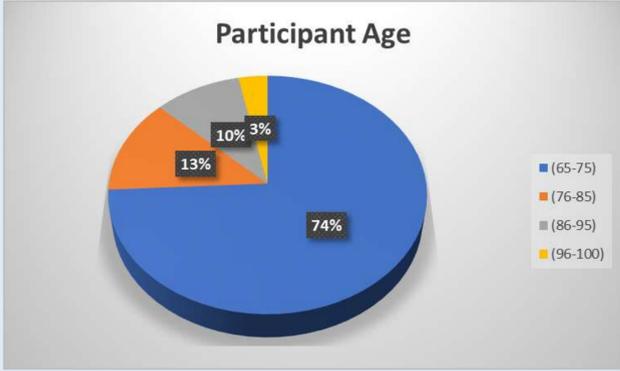
**METHODS**

The study identified about 200 older adults who were patients of the NSU Health clinics. The participants were identified through an Electronic Health Record report. The inclusion criteria included: older adults aged 65 years and above, having a last medical encounter within the past 12 months, and having primary insurance of Medicaid, Medicare, or commercial or private insurance. From September 2020 to February 2021, the team (including medical students, public health students, and SFGWEP staff) contacted 200 patients via telephone and conducted a comprehensive wellness survey developed by the study team, informed by validated surveys.

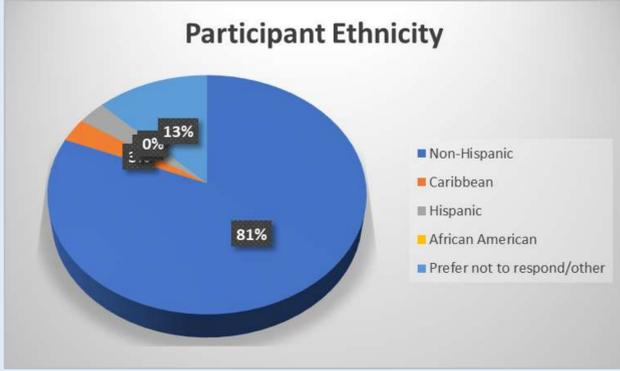
No commercial relationships to disclose.

# Assessing Needs, Well-being, and Telehealth Access of Older Adults with Limited Resources during COVID-19 Pandemic

Sashah Damier, MBA, CRCP-I<sup>1</sup>; Assma Twahir<sup>1</sup> ; Sweta Tewary, PhD<sup>1</sup> ; Naushira Pandya, MD, CMD, FACP<sup>1</sup> ; Nicole Cook, PhD, MPA<sup>1</sup>;  
 1. Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine, Department of Geriatrics



Patient Demographics		
Gender	N	%
Male	11	34
Female	21	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>



Category	Survey Question	Yes/Often	No/Never	Sometimes
Level of Isolation	Do you live alone?	(12,37.5%)	(20,62.5%)	(0,0%)
	Before stay-at-home order, isolation from others?	(3, 9.4%)	(26, 81.3%),	(3, 9.4%),
	Currently, how often you feel isolated from others?	(11, 34.4%)	(13, 40.6%)	(8, 25.0%)
	How often do you feel that you lack companionship?	(4, 12.5%)	(16, 50.0%)	(12, 37.5%)
Covid 19: Safety and Wellness	Are you about the Covid-19 Pandemic?	(19, 59.4%)	(3, 9.4%)	(10, 31.3%)
	Does the patient have a regular care provider?	(28, 90.3%)	(3, 9.7%)	(0,0%)
	Does patient have any immediate concerns?	(5, 16.1%)	(26, 83.9%)	(0,0%)
	How much difficulty do you have obtaining the food that you need because of the Covid-19 pandemic?	(0, 0.0%)	(31, 96.9%)	(1, 3.1%)
	Have you been diagnosed with COVID-19?	(1, 3.1%)	(31, 96.9%)	(0,0%)
	How much difficulty do you have with getting routine medical care because of the Covid-19 pandemic?	(7,21.9%)	(23,71.9%)	(2,6.3%)
	How much difficulty do you have obtaining the medications that you need because of the Covid-19 pandemic?	(1, 3.1%)	(30, 93.8%),	(1, 3.1%)
Education and Resources	Have you had difficulty obtaining a face covering or mask?	(4,12.5%)	(27, 84.4%)	(1,3.1%)
	Do you currently wear a face covering or mask when near other people?	(32, 100%)	(0,0%)	(0,0%)
	Do you routinely follow the news to stay informed on current information regarding Covid-19 in your community?	(28,87.5%)	(2,6.3%)	(2,6.3%)
	Do you understand the social distancing guidelines and hygiene for Covid-19? (RN go over protocols)	(32,100%)	(0,0.00%)	(0,0.00%)
	Do you follow the social distancing and hygiene guidelines for Covid-19? (RN go over protocols)	(31, 96.9%)	(1, 3.1%)	(0,0.00%)
	Has a close friend or family member been diagnosed with Covid-19?	(8, 25.0%)	(24, 75.0%)	(0,0.00%)
Telehealth and Support	Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, did you use live video on electronic devices (such as a computer or smart phone to communicate with friends and family)?	(17, 53.1%)	(15, 46.9%)	(0,0%)
	Have you rejected scheduling a telehealth visit offered by your physician during the Covid-19 pandemic?	(8, 25.0%)	(24, 75.0%)	(0,0%)
	Have you had a telehealth visit with your physician (instead of in person) due to COVID-19 pandemic?	(15, 46.9%)	(17, 53.1%)	(0,0%)
	Do you currently use live video (Facetime/Skype/Zoom) on electronic devices (such as a computer or smart phone) to stay connected with friends and family because of Covid-19?	(14,45.2%)	(15,48.4%)	(2,6.5%)
	Have you had a telehealth visit with your physician (instead of in person) due to COVID-19 pandemic?	(29,43.94%)	(36,54.55%)	(0,0%)
	Can you use live video without the assistance with other?	(20,62.5%)	(12,37.5%)	(0,0%)

**RESULTS**

Among the 200 patients called, 32 (16.3%) completed the wellness survey. Therefore, survey results were evaluated based on the 32 individuals who completed surveys. During discussion based on the pandemic, 19 (60%) expressed that they were very concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding barriers, 79% (n=25) expressed difficulty getting medical care; one person reported limited access to COVID-19 testing, one reported lack of face masks, and one reported challenges with obtaining medication refills. Overall,16% (n=5) of the participants voiced concerns over health and wellness, potentially influencing their access to care. Thirty-four percent (n=11) reported often feeling isolated from others. When screened for telehealth services and support, 53% (n=17) of the individuals said that they lacked knowledge about seeing their provider via telehealth, 56% (n=7) had limited information on education and resources, and 47% (n=15) expressed the need for telehealth education.

**CONCLUSION**

Wellness calls provided an opportunity to connect with older adults and to assess them for wellness needs. While the team could only complete wellness calls with 16% of identified older adults, we learned that loneliness and social isolation are significant risks. Therefore, there was a need for education and resources around telehealth, internet connectivity, devices, and phone connection. As a result of the wellness calls, a specific need for telehealth supporting devices was identified. Thus, SFGWEP provided Samsung Tablets (n=50) with preloaded education modules on COVID 19 resources and technical support to help facilitate telemedicine visits. Participants were also offered telehealth education and access to the virtual training modules uploaded on the SFGWEP website.

**REFERENCES**

1. Woolington, R. and Humburg, C., In Florida, 83 percent of coronavirus deaths are people 65 and older, Tampa Bay Times. <https://www.tampabay.com/news/health/2020/05/17/in-florida-83-percent-of-coronavirus-deaths-are-people-65-and-older/> . Published, May 17, 2020. Updated, May 19,2020, Accessed, May 26, 2020
2. Coronavirus-Induced Isolation Could Have Devastating Effect on Lonely Seniors. <https://miami.cbslocal.com/2020/03/24/coronavirus-isolation-devastating-effect-seniors/> .Accessed May 27, 2020