Designing a Virtual Appointment-Based Model for Community Pharmacy Practice to Support Physical Distancing during COVID-19 Pandemic

INTRO: The appointment-based model (ABM) is a proactive approach to pharmacy practice that synchronizes prescription refills with a scheduled patient-pharmacist appointment to review medication needs. It aims to improve adherence, refill rates, and clinical service uptake. Wholehealth, an independent banner of community pharmacies, was the first in Canada to implement and evaluate ABM. With COVID-19, ABM was re-designed to a virtual model for ongoing access while patients physically distance.

METHODS: To determine feasibility and effectiveness of implementing ABM virtually, literature searches were conducted on Pubmed, OVID and Google Scholar, looking at virtual pharmacy services, existing virtual ABMs, video versus telephone consultations and patients' technology preferences.

RESULTS: Findings showed efficacy of telephone and video models in identifying and addressing DTPs and improving adherence and refill rates. Both models had similar appointment durations, quality and outcomes, yet telephone was preferred by older patients for its accessibility and fewer barriers. Barriers to video included audiovisual difficulties, reduced cognitive ability, low computer literacy, unreliable internet connection and cost of video platforms.

DISCUSSION: Using existing literature, a virtual ABM was designed with telephone-based medication reviews and synchronized medication deliveries. Next steps include implementation and evaluation of this virtual ABM to determine efficacy and patient satisfaction.