

### **413 - Telehealth in Multiethnic Caregiver Support Group: Transition from Telephone to Video in the Age of COVID-19**

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Abstract Topics: Caregiver Issues, Telehealth

**Background:** Caregivers of persons with Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementias are a population in need of support as they are vulnerable to emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion associated with caregiver burnout. While CDC guidelines state that social distancing is the greatest protective factor, it can already exacerbate feelings of isolation and stress. Technology offers the opportunity to maximize socialization and access to healthcare; however, research shows that digital platforms are most underutilized by older and lower socioeconomic patients. **Objective:** This report describes the transition of a weekly caregiver support group from telephone to video conferencing to improve connectedness during a period of social isolation. **Method:** In 2020, the caregiver support group met weekly over the phone. At each session, there were increased discussions of moving the telephone support group to a video platform. A focused discussion about technology platforms was held to gain an understanding of caregiver attitudes and thoughts regarding technology in which caregivers worried that a video platform would be intrusive and invasive. In June 2020, unreliable phone service resulted in the group transitioning to video. **Results:** The caregiver group consisted of 5 active members, 2 African American, 2 Asian, and 1 Caucasian. Initial problems included connectivity issues, needing to switch to multiple devices, and assistance with troubleshooting and utilizing the platform. However, caregivers reported feeling that the transition to video was the most natural next step and assisted with reducing feelings of isolation, anxiety, and fear they reported as a result of social distancing due to COVID-19. Caregivers reported feeling connected and because they knew each other so intimately, no longer felt video was intrusive. **Conclusions:** For older populations who are not familiar with technology, it is important to take steps before beginning a new platform service. This allows for a natural progression to unfamiliar technology. The video platform provided an opportunity for caregivers to be together while apart, which is important for mental health and decreasing caregiver burden.