BACKGROUND

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of teledentistry was limited

Adoption was hindered by many factors including:
- Reluctance to innovate
- Concerns about costs related to infrastructure and software
- Necessary technological skills to use teledentistry
- Concerns about patients’ acceptance of a virtual visit

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the adoption and expansion of teledentistry:
- Full or partial closure of health care provider organizations, including dental practices, catalyzed innovative thinking about how best to meet patient needs
- Executive orders encouraged use of teledentistry to care for patients
- Federal directives expanded reimbursement for teledentistry
- Teledentistry was enabled by emergency directives that loosened stringent HIPAA requirements

STUDY OBJECTIVES

To describe the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery of oral health services in the dental safety-net using teledentistry to consult with patients

Objective 1: Conduct a review of enabling statutes and regulations for the provision of teledentistry services in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia

Objective 2: Develop an Infographic

METHODS

Collaborated with NNOHA to identify most pertinent topics around teledentistry regulation

Compiled a dictionary of regulatory parameters for providing teledentistry services in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia

Reviewed and subsequently compiled data:
- Understood basic circumstances and permissions for the conduct of teledentistry services in each jurisdiction
- Determined common elements that could be compared across states
- Identified current standing law that guided the provision of teledentistry: once executive orders expanding privileges had or would expire

RESULTS

Synchronous teledentistry was limited to only video in 21 states

Video or audio was permitted in 24 states and DC

Teledentistry services via other modalities (such as mobile apps and email) were permitted in 16 states

Three states required that a patient must be an established patient of record prior to a teledentistry visit, while 18 states allowed a patient to become established as a patient of record during the teledentistry visit

Patient-informed consent was required for any teledentistry visit in 26 states and DC

Conclusions and Asynchronous teledentistry

Synchronous and asynchronous teledentistry were allowed in 41 states, while synchronous-only teledentistry was allowed in 5 states and DC

Allowed Providers (Dentists and Dental Hygienists)

Dentists and dental hygienists were allowed to provide care via teledentistry in 34 states, while only dentists were allowed to provide teledentistry in 12 states and DC

Telehealth legislation is highly nuanced; in some states, regulatory language is detailed and descriptive, while in other states they are vague and subject to broad interpretation

Fundamental terminology and definitions related to virtual services vary considerably, suggesting that teledentistry is still an emerging practice

Sources of regulatory authority vary widely in states, as do the ways in which teledentistry use is addressed

Inforgraphic informs providers, policymakers, and teledentistry advocates of the variation of teledentistry regulation across states

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