BACKGROUND & RESEARCH GOAL

- The COVID-19 pandemic prompted many genetics clinics across the country and globally to integrate telehealth modalities (telephone and/or videoconference) into their clinical practice to promote the safety of patients and clinic staff members.
- As it is expected that telehealth will continue to be utilized in clinical practice especially as a way to increase access of genetic services for patients. Better technology support is needed in order to optimize genetic services via telehealth for patients and providers.

METHODS

Survey Instrumentation
- 39-item online survey included multiple choice, dropdown, slider, Likert scale, and open-ended response questions exploring genetic providers’ experiences with telehealth providing clinical genetic services to their patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data Analysis
- Characteristics of the closed ended questions were summarized using basic descriptive statistical analysis (frequencies and percentages)
- An inductive thematic analysis was used for analyzing the open-ended questions following the five analysis phases: familiarizing with data, generating initial codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The intercoder percent agreement between the two coders was approximately 94%.

RESULTS

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, clinical genetic counselors in Wisconsin showed strong interest in utilizing telehealth in their clinical practice, especially as a way to increase access of genetic services for patients. Better technology support is needed in order to optimize genetic services via telehealth for patients and providers.

CONCLUSION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Conclusion
- Clinical genetic counselors in Wisconsin generally reported positive experiences integrating telehealth into their patient care during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Provider experiences improved as the pandemic progressed.
- Virtually all genetic counselors have now had experience with telehealth, which may be an asset for ongoing delivery of timely genetic counseling services. 
- While in person visits will certainly need to be available for patients who are required to be seen in clinic, with better technology support from their institutions, many genetic counselors wanted to utilize telehealth in their clinical practice especially as a way to increase access of genetic services for patients.

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This study met criteria for exemptation, which was determined by the Education and Social/Behavioral Science IRB at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (BRI2020-1251).

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