



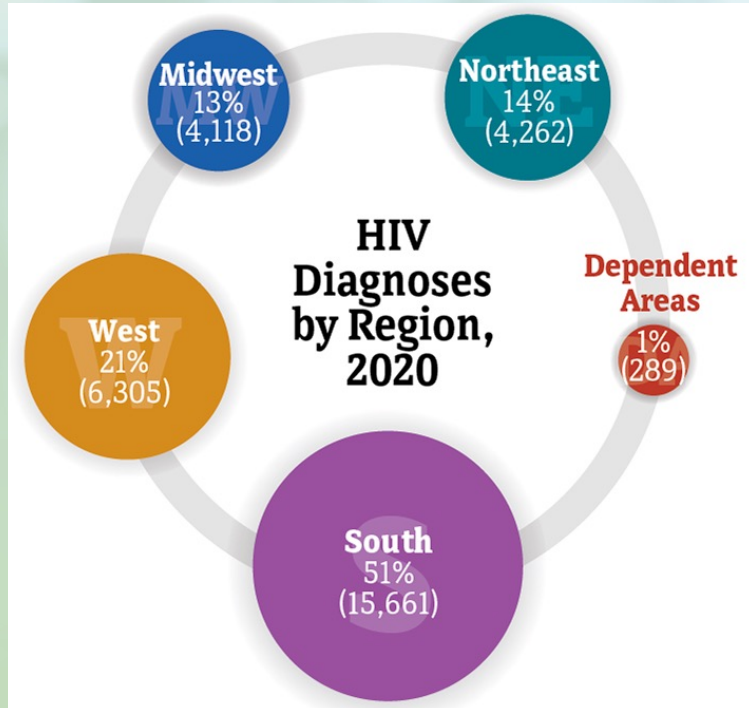
Telehealth perspectives, barriers and facilitators among people with HIV in rural Florida: qualitative and quantitative findings

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Background



- The U.S. South has the highest HIV diagnosis rates of any region.
- People with HIV (PWH) in the rural South face unique barriers that impact their care and treatment outcomes.



Background

- **Telehealth:** any technology (including cell phones, smart phones, tablets, and computers) that is used to access and receive health care remotely.
- Telehealth has the potential to improve care for PWH living in the rural South.
- However, there is a paucity of data regarding access to telehealth and perspectives and barriers to telehealth among PWH in the rural South.



Objectives

Among a sample of PWH in rural Florida we used quantitative and qualitative methods to examine:

- Access to telehealth
- Perspectives of telehealth
- Barriers and opportunities to improve telehealth



Methods: Quantitative

Recruitment areas



- We analyzed cross-sectional survey data collected between March 2022 and January 2023 from 216 PWH enrolled in the Florida Cohort Study who resided in rural areas located in north and in central Florida.
 - Florida Cohort Study: large cohort study focusing on PWH in Florida
- Descriptive statistics were used to describe access to and interest in telehealth.



Methods: Qualitative

- Additionally, we interviewed 25 PWH from clinics in rural north and central Florida.
- Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted over Zoom or in-person.
- Applied thematic analysis was used to identify emerging themes organized around three *a priori* domains:
 1. Telehealth barriers
 2. Perceived benefits of telehealth
 3. Opportunities to improve care using telehealth



Results: Quantitative





Results: Sample Characteristics

Characteristic (n=216)	
Age in years, median (IQR)	52 (39-59)
Male, n (%)	123 (57)
Black, n (%)	83 (38)
Hispanic, n (%)	41 (19)
Annual household income < \$20,000, n (%)	110 (51)
Education level: high school or less, n (%)	109 (50)
Currently unemployed or disabled, n (%)	131 (61)
Disengaged in HIV care, n (%)	45 (21)
ART adherence < 95%, n (%)	51 (24)
Past year detectable viral load, n (%)	43 (20)



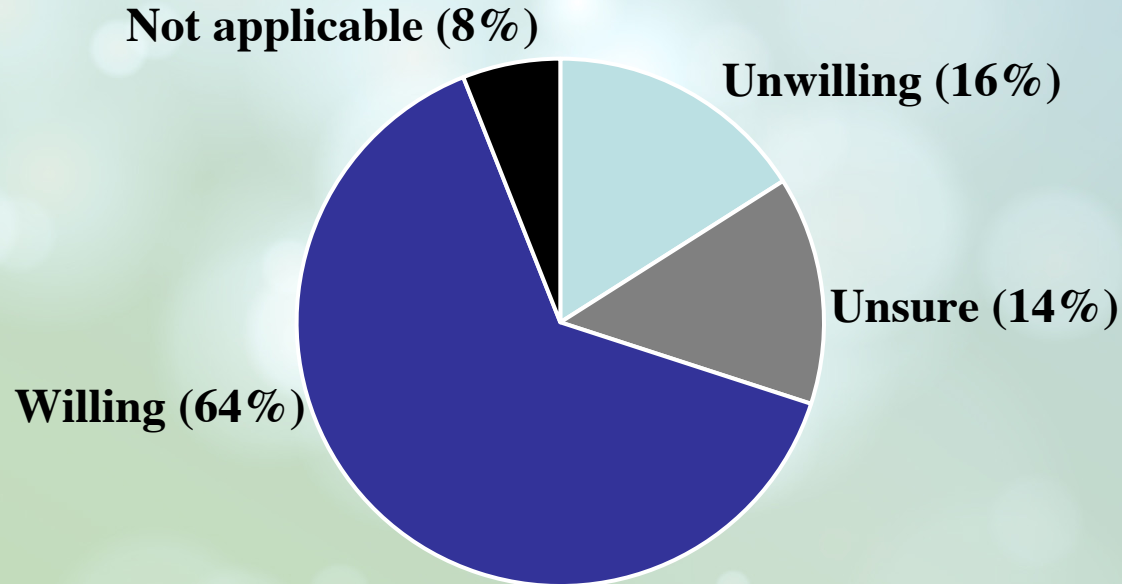
Results: Telehealth Access

Characteristic (n=216)	
Access to cell phone, n (%)	212 (98)
Access to cell phone with unlimited minutes, n (%)	117 (91)
Access to smartphone, n (%)	195 (90)
Access to smartphone with a camera, n (%)	191 (88)
Has a private space to make phone or video calls, n (%)	168 (78)
Access to reliable cellular service, n (%)	178 (82)
Has reliable home internet, n (%)	162 (75)
Has used a videoconferencing platform such as Skype or Zoom, n (%)	89 (67)
Has used phone or video call for a remote visit with a doctor or case manager, n (%)	77 (58)
Has access to a computer, n (%)	126 (58)
Doesn't run out of monthly cellular data, n (%)	58 (45)



Results: Telehealth Perspectives

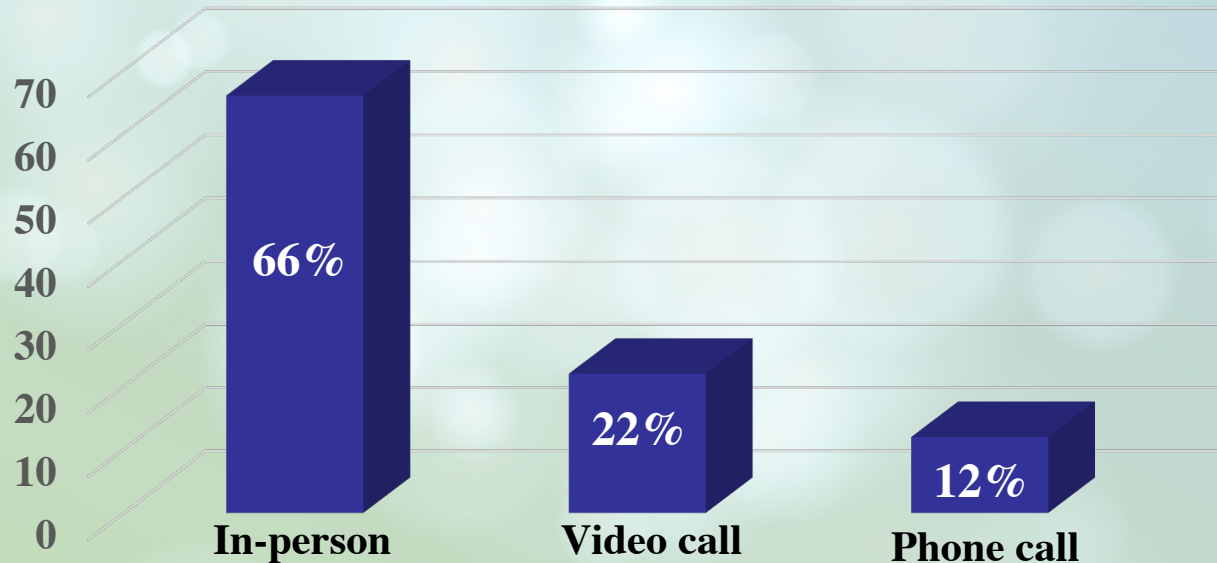
If you had everything you needed, how willing would you be to use telehealth (video call) for primary care? (n=133)





Results: Telehealth Preferences

If you had all the necessary equipment, what would be your preferred method of seeing your HIV provider? (n=214)





Results: Qualitative





Results: Sample Characteristics

Characteristic (n=25)	
Age in years, median, IQR	53 (32 – 63)
Female, n (%)	13 (52)
Black, n (%)	9 (36)
Annual household income \leq \$20,000, n (%)	10 (40)
Education level: high school or less, n (%)	12 (48)
Has transportation difficulties, n (%)	11 (44)
Unstable housing, n (%)	8 (32)
Comfortable with technology, n (%)	20 (80)
Never runs out of cellular minutes, n (%)	19 (76)
Never runs out of cellular data, n (%)	18 (72)
Access to home Wi-Fi, n (%)	24 (96)



Domain 1: Barriers to Telehealth

Themes
Privacy/confidentiality concerns
Financial constraints
Lack of human connection
Technical challenges



Privacy and Confidentiality Concerns

With telehealth, sometimes you just don't have the privacy you need to have those conversations. If I'm face to face with you, at least I know there's nobody else in your room either. You want privacy that you might not necessarily have with telehealth. (Female, age 51)



Financial Constraints

If I make financial decisions, there's certain things I prioritize. I've got to keep the lights on and the internet on. I've had to prioritize making sure I have functioning equipment and bandwidth for internet access. And those are just maintenance costs. God help you if you drop your device. (Male, age 51)



Domain 2: Perceived Benefits of Telehealth

Themes

Stigma and discrimination reduction

Improved access to health care

Convenience/efficiency



Stigma and Discrimination Reduction

Being able to do telehealth is a game changer. It's less disconcerting to be in your own home seeking care, instead of facing the possible rejection and stigma in a doctor's office that you're already uncomfortable with, especially for someone who's in a rural area, telehealth will be a savior. (Female, age 28).



Improved Access to Health Care

There are appointments I would not have been able to make. I can without a doubt say I would not be as far ahead as I am in the recovery process for substance use if not for telehealth with my provider and support group through Zoom. I might not even be here. Everyone had a hard road during COVID. (Male, age 51).



Domain 3: Opportunities to Improve Care using Telehealth

Themes
Expanding telehealth resources and services
Use of telehealth for emotional support/mental health
Integration of telehealth in HIV clinical settings



Use of Telehealth for Emotional Support/Mental Health

When COVID came, the face-to-face things were out the window. I had to introduce myself to technology, which I fought against forever. Now I'm really embracing it because it's that open door for me to still meet with my peers. We still connect with those that are really not comfortable living with HIV and so you don't feel so alone.” (Female, age 67).



Conclusions

- In a sample of PWH from rural Florida, the majority had access to telehealth.
- Predominant barriers to telehealth use included running out of cellular data, costs, and concern for loss of confidentiality.
- Despite these barriers, most participants reported a number of perceived benefits and expressed willingness and interest in telehealth services.
- Future research is needed to investigate how we can address these identified barriers to care so that access to telehealth in this population can be improved.



Limitations

- Generalizability
 - Relatively small sample size
 - Not all rural counties in Florida were sampled (panhandle and south).
- Categorization/definition of ‘rural’
 - Lack of a consensus definition for ‘rural’: The US Census Bureau uses Zip Code data to determine rurality.
- Descriptive nature of the research
 - This study did not assess associations between telehealth and HIV outcomes.

Thank you!

#ADHERENCE2023



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