

## **Project Title**

Pivoting to Telepractice during COVID-19: The Clinicians' Perspective

## **Project Lead and Members**

Project lead: Tang Mei Ai Florence

Project members: Chua Huiling, Christine, Seow Chun Ling Ferlin

## **Organisation(s) Involved**

Tan Tock Seng Hospital

## **Healthcare Family Group Involved in this Project**

Allied Health

## **Specialty or Discipline (if applicable)**

Speech Therapy

## **Project Period**

Start date: April 2020

Completed date: June 2020

## **Aims**

To determine what factors impact telepractice adoption amongst Speech Therapists at Tan Tock Seng Hospital during the Circuit Breaker period in Singapore

## **Background**

See poster appended / below

## **Methods**

See poster appended / below

## Results

See poster appended / below

## Lessons Learnt

- 1) External factors like COVID-19 and Singapore's Circuit Breaker period were pivotal in pushing healthcare services toward telepractice.
- 2) However, other factors were important to help clinicians embrace this change, such as clinician education, providing adequate resources and service redesign.
- 3) Evaluating patient factors may be the key to facilitating continued telepractice uptake.

## Conclusion

See poster appended / below

## Additional Information

This project attained the Merit award (Category: 'COVID-19 Our Response to a new challenge (Poster)) at the Singapore Health & Biomedical Congress (SHBC) 2021

## Project Category

Technology, Digital Health, Telehealth, Care & Process Redesign, Quality Improvement, Clinical Practice Improvement

## Keywords

Clinician Adoption, COVID-19, Circuit Breaker

## Name and Email of Project Contact Person(s)

Name: Florence Tang

Email: florence\_ma\_tang@ttsh.com.sg

# Pivoting to Telepractice During COVID-19: The Clinicians' Perspective

Tang Mei Ai Florence<sup>1</sup>, Chua Huiling, Christine<sup>2</sup>, Seow Chun Ling Ferlin<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Speech Therapy Department, Tan Tock Seng Hospital

<sup>2</sup>Allied Health Services, Woodlands Health

## Introduction

Telepractice involves delivering speech therapy services via telecommunications, and has been found to be similarly effective to face-to-face sessions<sup>1</sup>. While telepractice is not new, its uptake was significantly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was especially evident during Singapore's Circuit Breaker (CB) period from April to June 2020, when stricter rules were imposed to limit non-essential hospital visits.

Clinicians at the Speech Therapy department in Tan Tock Seng Hospital had to pivot to use and offer telepractice. This study aimed to identify factors impacting telepractice adoption by clinicians before and after the CB period.

## Methods

At the start of the CB, surveys were collected from 25 clinicians by convenience sampling. A Likert scale was used for clinicians to rate how often they offered telepractice to patients. Open-ended questions were asked to identify perceived barriers and facilitators to telepractice. Response themes were analysed and targeted interventions put in place. These were structured to loosely follow the multi-theories model of adult learning<sup>2</sup>. Specific interventions included:

- Redesigning telepractice workflows
- Daily roll calls to communicate information
- Asking clinicians to share experiences with one another
- Improving technological infrastructure (e.g. Wi-Fi routers, resource bank)
- Training department telepractice champions to assist learners
- Creating patient education materials

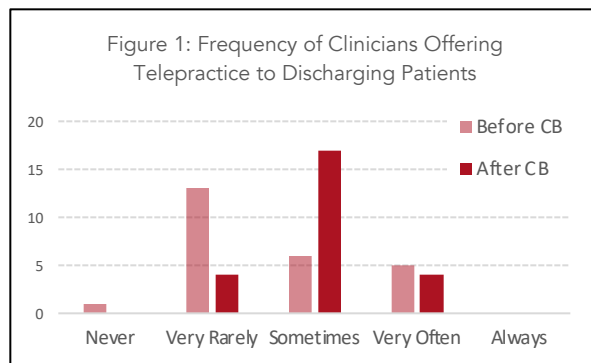
A similar survey was repeated at the end of the CB period.

## Discussion and Conclusions

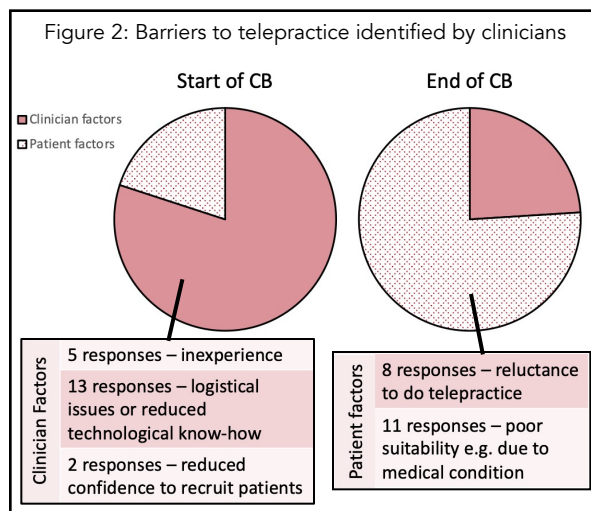
While COVID-19 and Singapore's CB provided a key push towards telepractice, concurrent clinician education, ensuring adequate logistics and infrastructure, and service redesign were important to facilitate clinician adoption. Evaluating patient factors and implementing more patient-targeted initiatives may be the key to facilitating continued uptake of telepractice in future.

## Results

Notably, in terms of clinicians proactively offering telepractice, the median response shifted from "very rarely" at the start of the CB period to "sometimes" by the end (Figure 1).



At the start of the CB, 20/25 of clinicians identified clinician-related factors as key barriers to telepractice adoption. By the end of CB, many clinician factors appeared resolved. Patient factors became more prominent, with 19/25 responses focused on this (Figure 2).



## References

1. Weidner, Kristen & Lowman, Joneen. (2020). Telepractice for Adult Speech-Language Pathology Services: A Systematic Review. Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups. 5. 1-13. 10.1044/2019\_PERSP-19-00146.
2. Taylor, David & Hamdy, Hossam. (2013). Adult learning theories: Implications for learning and teaching in medical education: AMEE Guide No. 83, Medical Teacher, 35:11, e1561-e1572, DOI: 10.3109/0142159X.2013.828153