



How to Get the Most From Your Telehealth Visit For Parkinson's

Davis Phinney Foundation

Jenna Deidel: (Director of Programs and Outreach, Davis Phinney Foundation):

So, you know, in scenarios where telehealth is my only option, you guys highlighted a few different reasons for that, obviously right now could be, you know, COVID risk. It could be distance, could be weather, could be having transportation. It could be that I've moved, but I wanna stay connected with my provider if that's an opportunity. So if this is really, it's not about making a choice now, between in person and telehealth, it's really if telehealth is my option, I wanna get the most out of it. What sort of additional, or, you know, preparation, what advice would you give to folks to make sure that that's a really great experience for them?

Gregory Pontone, MD, MHS (Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Neurology, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Director of Johns Hopkins Parkinson's Neuropsychiatry Clinic):

I wanna echo, I'm smiling cause Indu and I talked about this earlier in the week. I wanna share first of all, be in the right location with minimal distraction. So, you know, she gave some examples of where people have tried to conduct their visit and it really is important to have sort of a quiet environment where you can focus. So that's the first one. The second is, you know, make a little list ahead of time. Even a few minutes ahead of time of what you, you know, what's important to you. So, you know, it doesn't have to be long, it can be two or three things that you wanna make sure are answered on the call because as she mentioned, you know, you forget it and you say, I'll call in 30 minutes and on 30 minutes for probably two patients down the road, you know, with several more to go.

So, you know, making sure that you have an inclusive agenda and then having access to any recent updates from other providers. So, we function as specialists. And so that means we have to work in coordination. If there was a visit between our last visit with you and another provider, maybe we got the records faxed and maybe we hadn't, and so if you have an update that's gonna be really helpful, and then I think Indu said this several times, we really, probably one of the most important and low hanging fruits in any visit, whether it's in person or remote is sort of just making sure that we're on the same page in terms of the medications you're taking, because so many errors happen when there's been small changes or misunderstandings, and so, either having an accurate list or the actual bottles, you know, Indu said that when she's in clinic, she has the bottles and she looks at them. And I mean, that's so many of this. I mean, I can't tell you how many problems that's headed off at the pass just by going through that five-minute procedure. So I think at a bare minimum, those are the things I'd say.

Indu Subramanian, MD (Clinical Professor of Neurology, University of California, Los Angeles):

Yeah, so good lighting, right? We can't be seeing you in like a dark cave. Good sound. So, you know, make sure that's not so loud and noisy, there's 50 other people going on or like construction going on right behind you. And then if you can have a family member who is savvy with the technology be there 30 minutes before and help you set up, it really decreases the anxiety cause a lot of people have so much anxiety around just connecting and I've had people, you know, have to deep breathe after connecting with you. Like thank God I was able to connect to the link and I wasn't sure. And this and that. And so I think if you can, you know, all these sort of technology issues can be handled by somebody else. It's definitely helpful having an extra person to maybe type something while we're talking, take notes if that's available to you, that's definitely helpful for us and also to hold up the bottles. And you know, if you're having any mobility issues. Having a place where you can show me your exam. So some people literally are, have no space. I can't watch you walk. You know I need to be able to examine you're walking. I need to be able to look at, you know you a little bit, so be able to push the chair back and really show me your tremor and what's going on in your legs. You know, so you want enough room, that's safe behind you to be able to push the chair back and then move it up and then walk for me a little bit. So those are all, you know, pretty helpful as well.

And then you know, having a pen and paper there so that you can take notes. Knowing how to access the chat cause you know, sometimes we'll type changes into the chat and then taking the time to go ahead and go in if you have an electronic medical record that's accessible to you to see what we actually wrote as the changes and then print that off and have it. These are all very, very helpful. And, you know, even though it's casual and I know my patients love seeing me in my house and my boys walking behind me or whatever and you know, it ends up being sometimes quite social again, I think you wanna be mindful of the schedule, right? So, you know we will do our best start on time, but sometimes we get delayed.

So don't, you know, oh my doc's not here, let me go, you know, to the grocery store, well then, you know, we've now missed your visit. Just like you would wait in my waiting room. You might have to wait around, you know, for some time before we can connect. And then making sure that if there are family members that are new, that they're part of, you know the dialogue but they aren't dominating the entire, you know, half an hour in the background and you know, I've had, I wanna hear from you, we wanna, you know, obviously take you know, the time to meet somebody, but you know, we have to be mindful of the schedule and, and we wanna give you the focus and help you with the presenting problem you know, that you have. So, I think it's, even though it's a bit casual and other people are involved we just wanna make it as, as conducive to a visit where there's a beginning and middle and end. And we, you know, wrap up and give you the information as possible in a timely fashion. So, that's what I would say.

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