Patient experience and satisfaction with remote memory assessment: responding to clinical need in times of COVID-19 restrictions

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Patient experience and satisfaction with remote memory assessment - responding to clinical need in times of COVID-19 restrictions.

MALGORZATA (Gosia) RACZEK1,2, Nicolas Farina3, Emma Porter2, Latha Velayudhan4, Rajesh Abraham5, Stephanie Daley1.

1. Brighton and Sussex Medical School, UK
2. Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, UK
3. King’s College London, UK
4. South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, UK
5. Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Remote memory assessment is a positive experience for patients and carers. The remote pathway should be considered as an option available during and beyond the pandemic to improve access to memory services and patient choice.

INTRODUCTION
The suspension of memory services during the COVID-19 pandemic delayed dementia diagnosis and access to early intervention. Some services responded to the challenge by developing a remote memory assessment pathway to comply with reduced social contact measures.

The aim of our study was to establish whether remote model is considered a satisfactory experience within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and to understand the factors associated with patient and carer satisfaction with the remote assessment pathway.

METHODS
Participants were recruited between Oct 2020 and June 2021 from patients (and their carers) referred to memory clinics in West Sussex, Surrey and South London, UK, who were assessed over a video or telephone. Participants completed an 11-item questionnaire capturing satisfaction across a range of elements, contextual items (the impact of the pandemic, loneliness, previous experience of using teleconference technology and diagnosis), as well as 3 dimensions from Patient Experience Questionnaire (PEQ). Descriptive statistics are reported at a whole sample level, separated by patient and carer status. A hypothesis driven set of bivariate analyses (Spearman’s rank) was used to understand the association between satisfaction and key independent factors across the whole sample.

RESULTS
81 participants (42 carers, 39 patients) were typically older adults (mean age=67.9, SD=13.10), female (n=46, 56.8%) and white British (n=73, 90.1%). 75 participants (92.6%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Overall, I was satisfied with the assessment”. A composite satisfaction score was derived from remaining items of the satisfaction questionnaire (ranging from 1-5, 5 being most satisfied). Participants on average reported high satisfaction, 4.13 (SD=0.49) There was no significant difference between patients and carers on either measure.

Only participants’ communication experiences and perceived communication barriers were significantly associated with satisfaction scores (Table 1).

CONCLUSIONS
Participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the remote memory assessment pathway, influenced by communication experience and communication barriers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors associated with satisfaction</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Satisfaction Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographic and contextual factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
<td>(p=0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry about contracting COVID-19</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>(p=0.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COVID-19 restrictions adherence</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>(p=0.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>(p=0.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of video call software</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>(p=0.19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| PEQ communication experience       | 0.77    | (p<0.001)          |
| PEQ communication barriers         | 0.09    | (p=0.45)           |
| PEQ emotional reaction             | -0.76   | (p=0.001)          |

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