

OTs' Experiences Working With Caregivers During Remote Home Assessments

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The purpose of this study is to explore clinicians' experiences of working with caregivers during remote home assessments. Clinicians physically visit patients' homes to conduct home assessments. However, virtual visits increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting home assessment delivery methods. Although previous studies have reported a need for caregiver involvement during remote home assessments, no studies have investigated clinicians' experiences working with caregivers. This phenomenological qualitative study is a part of a larger study investigating the current practice of home assessments and modifications within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). We used purposive and snowball sampling to target VHA occupational therapists with experience in conducting remote home assessments in the last 5 years. A total of 15 VHA clinicians across the US completed semi-structured individual interviews via Microsoft Teams. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis based on Colaizzi (1978)' approach was used to develop key themes inductively from the interview transcripts. We identified three major themes of clinicians' experience with caregivers during remote home assessments: consideration, education, and caregiver role. Clinicians consider clinician-caregiver-patient relationships, caregivers' technology skills and willingness to participate in remote home assessments, and Veterans' health conditions before deciding to conduct remote home assessments. Education was delivered via demonstration, email, YouTube, and telephone, focusing on how to use telehealth devices and conduct measurements. The main role of caregivers was to help clinicians connect with Veterans via videoconferencing as well as provide measurements and photos of the home environment. Clinicians need to consider caregiver ability and education for conducting remote home assessments. This study can help clinicians determine the best delivery method for home assessments.

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