TECHNOLOGY USE AMONG OLDER ADULTS TO MANAGE THEIR HEALTH DURING A GLOBAL PANDEMIC
Gashaye M. Tefera, Erin Robinson, and Geunhye Park, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, United States

Risk of severe COVID-19 illness increases with age, and older adults are more likely to be hospitalized and die from COVID-19 and related complications as compared to their younger counterparts. This reality, combined with pandemic-related lockdown and social distancing policies, has increased in-home isolation for older adults. This includes cancelling in-person healthcare appointments and conducting many appointments via tele-health. As older adults have had to quickly pivot to learning new technologies, little is known about their experiences with navigating virtual healthcare during the pandemic. Therefore, this qualitative study aims to address that gap. One-on-one interviews (N=29) were conducted with older adults (Mean age=71.5; 86% female) via phone/Zoom. Participants were asked about their healthcare experiences during the pandemic and the role technology played. Interviews were transcribed and thematically analyzed using Nvivo12 software. Findings demonstrate that participants used technology to schedule medical appointments, engage in virtual visits with their providers, set reminders to take medications, and undertake their daily exercise routine. Post-lockdown, some participants preferred in-person visits due to the nature of their diagnosis, personal preference, or unfamiliarity with the needed technology. Older adults encountered challenges including cancelled appointments, miscommunication with providers, and lack of skill to use technologies. Cancellation of appointments and postponement of treatments affected the health of some of the participants. Implications of this research can inform tele-health approaches with older patients, as well as provider communication and coordination of care. Leveraging technology for preventative health approaches can also assist older adults in ongoing health maintenance and promote well-being.

TELEHEALTH AS AN ELEMENT OF HOME AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES IN A PANDEMIC: AN INTRINSIC CASE STUDY IN TWO RURAL AREAS
Nancy Karlin,1 and Joyce Weil,2 1. University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado, United States, 2. University of Northern Colorado, University of Northern Colorado, Colorado, United States

COVID-19 has changed the face of health care delivery. Using technology as a way to ensure Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) as an option for older adults in rural areas is of increasing interest as a result of the pandemic. Literature suggests older adults do not adopt telehealth and/or medicine practices due to barriers (e.g., Internet and computer availability) and do not use telemedicine as a form of communication with medical staff. However, the combination of needing health care during the pandemic and having federal coverage via Medicare for telehealth virtual visit. Still studies suggest older adults may lack the necessary information about how to adopt telehealth and telemedicine and that they do not see their benefits. Additionally, the cost of technology, limited Internet access and rural connectivity issues persist. This study evaluates the potential for telehealth/medicine use in rural communities through two case studies of rural older persons in the Eastern Plains of Colorado and rural Western Nebraska. Results indicate, for older persons responding to the telehealth/medicine questions, there is support for its potential use with some using teleconferencing, health portals, along with the expectation that telehealth/medicine would be part of new health care systems. Resistance was met by some older adults in the Colorado sample who preferred face-to-face contact alongside other concerns about potential usage barriers such as the lack of Internet services or consistent connectivity. These participants indicated a lack of awareness in finding out how to access this form of medical support.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON OLDER ADULTS
Rachel Ungar,1 Rifky Tkatch,1 Jane Huang,1 Sandra Kraemer,2 James Schaeffer,1 and Charlotte Yeh,3 1. UnitedHealth Group, Minnetonka, Minnesota, United States, 2. UnitedHealthcare, Minnetonka, Minnesota, United States, 3. AARP Services, Inc., Washington, District of Columbia, United States

Background: The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically influenced the health and well-being of older adults. Changes in lifestyle patterns has required reframing communication habits and learning new skills to maintain social connections and access healthcare. Objectives: To assess 1) well-being measured prior to and during the COVID-19 era; and 2) use and comfort level of technology for social interactions and telehealth visits during this time.
Methods: A mailed survey to a randomly selected national sample (>65) during the summers of 2018, 2019, and 2020. Measures included mental and physical well-being and various psychosocial measures. For 2020, questions related to COVID-19 and the use of technology were included.
Results: A total of 4,696 (2018), 3,976 (2019) and 2,726 (2020) responded to these surveys (response rate ~27%). Overall, most constructs remained stable despite the ongoing pandemic. Most respondents reported average or high resilience (90%), high purpose (48%), stable social networks (76%), and low stress (55%). However, loneliness increased during 2020 (57%). Respondents who used technology were more likely to connect with family and friends. Only 43% reported high comfort with using technology, with older age (>75) less comfortable. At the time of the survey 37% had not seen a healthcare provider through telehealth services, and 15% felt their healthcare needs were not met by a telehealth experience.
Conclusion: Results demonstrate that respondents were doing well during COVID-19. Yet increases in loneliness and greater technology needs to stay socially connected and to access healthcare may result in negative long-term health outcomes.

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AGING, EMPATHY, AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIORS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
Isu Cho,1 Ryan Daley,2 Tony Cunningham,2 Elizabeth Kensinger,2 and Angela Gutches,1 1. Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, United States, 2. Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, United States

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