

TELEHEALTH IMPLEMENTATION AT MEDZOU COMMUNITY HEALTH CLINIC IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Introduction

- MedZou Community Health Clinic is a student-run free clinic (SRFC) in Columbia, Missouri that helps cover gaps in healthcare access and provide care to the uninsured.
- SRFCs across the country were subject to unprecedented shifts in care delivery brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to the rapid implementation and utilization of telehealth services.
 - This change evolved as an effort to continue providing care to patients while simultaneously limiting the risk of disease transmission to medical students and others involved in clinic nights.
- MedZou switched from in-person visits to strictly telehealth visits after the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) issued a joint statement pausing medical student involvement with patient care on March 17, 2020 and all in-person visits at our single-center institution were suspended.
- Beginning April 13, 2020, MedZou began offering telehealth visits and telehealth was used as the sole method for patient visits for almost 1 year, until April 1, 2021.

Study Aims

This study aims to describe the transition in care delivery which occurred at MedZou in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and how implementation of telehealth services was achieved.

Results

MedZou Clinic completed 428 Telehealth visits for 201 unique patients between 4/1/20 and 4/31/21.



Figure 1. MedZou Community Health Clinic director divisions and services offered.



Figure 2. Demographic differences between MedZou Community Health Clinic patients and the Boone County population from the U.S. Census Bureau.

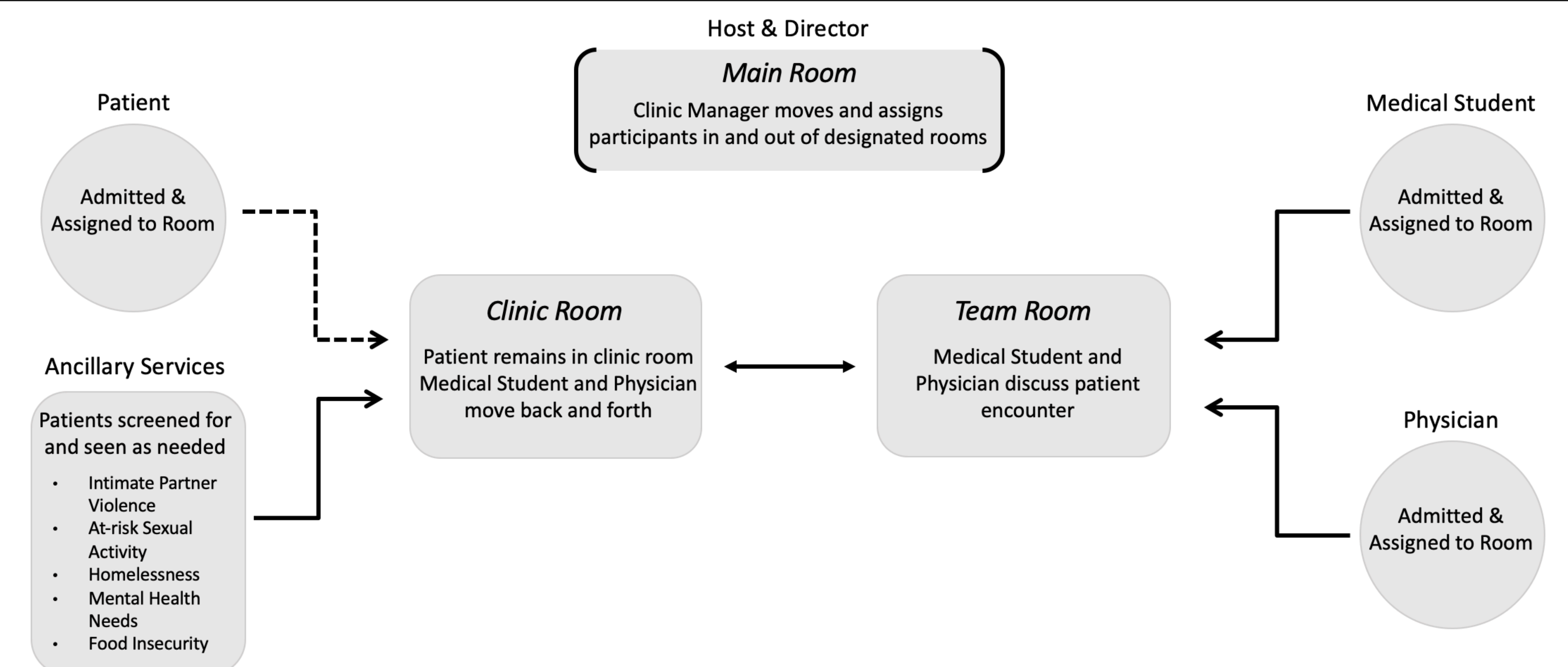


Figure 3. Telehealth clinic workflow.

Table 1: Overview of a patient encounter via telehealth.

Part I: Pre-Clinic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient liaisons calls patients to schedule an appointment • Secure & private zoom link sent to patient • Medical reconciliation completed by pharmacy team via telephone
Part II: Interview Patient
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient remains in clinic room • Patient is screened by Food Insecurity and Prevention, Intake and Trauma Teams for any needs in clinic room • Medical student is assigned to clinic room and interviews patient
Part III: Team Huddle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical student is transferred back to team room once interview is complete • Physician is assigned to team room • Medical student & physician discuss plan of care • Ancillary services is added to discussion based on needs that were raised
Part IV: Conclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical student, physician and ancillary services discuss plan with patient • Patient exits meeting

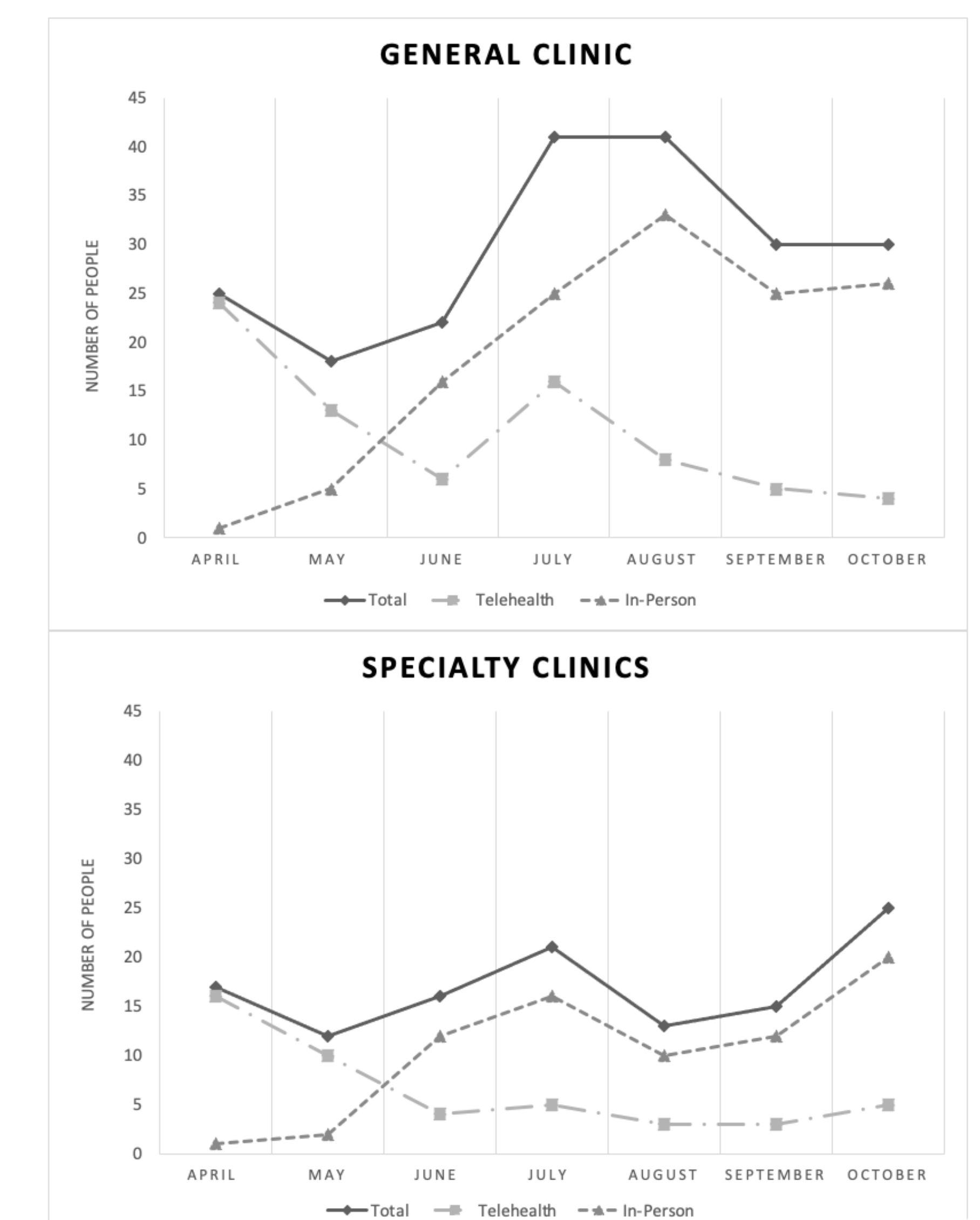


Figure 4. Telehealth and in-person appointment trends in 2021 comparing general clinic and specialty clinics.

Conclusions

- MedZou successfully rapidly implemented telehealth visits in response to the restrictions on direct-patient contact for students which resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Clinic now functions as a hybrid of in-person and telehealth visits.
- This adaptation in care delivery has the potential to increase access to care for patients unable to be present for in-person visits in the future.
- Telehealth visits also provide Springfield-campus students with opportunities to continue serving uninsured patients of the Columbia-area which was not available prior to this change.