Use of Virtual Patient Education to Improve Patient Understanding of Hereditary Cancer Risk Assessment and Genetic Literacy

Royce T. Adkins MD, FACOG; Richard N. Waldman, MD, FACOG; Mark S. DeFrancesco, MD, FACOG; John P. Feltz, MD, FACOG; Daniel S. Welling, MD, FACOG; Wade A. Neiman, MD, FACOG

Background
- Hereditary cancer risk assessment (HCRA), including genetic testing, is an essential component of obstetrics and gynecology (OB/Gyn) practice.
- However, providers may lack the time or expertise to counsel patients about genetic testing and its implications.

OBJECTIVE:
- We describe the implementation of virtual patient education (vPE) in OB/Gyn practices, and its impact on patient understanding of genetic testing.

Methods
- HCRA processes at 5 community OB/Gyn practices were observed over an 8-week pre-intervention period.
- Providers were then trained over 3–4 weeks to incorporate vPE, comprising a pre-recorded video (vPE-V; 2 sites) or the video and a telephone call with a certified genetic counselor (vPE-VT; 3 sites), following a 4-week practice period, HCRA and vPE metrics were collected over 4–8 weeks.
- Patients and providers also completed a satisfaction survey regarding their vPE experience.

Results
- Across all study sites, a total of 1,285 patients met the guideline criteria for genetic testing in the post-intervention period.
- 605 patients completed vPE, representing 47.1% of those who met testing guidelines, or 56.5% of the 1070 who were offered genetic testing.
- Among patients who did not complete vPE, reasons included feeling they could make an informed decision without vPE (33.6%), lack of time (17.4%), preferring to speak with their provider (15.4%), and having already been tested (12.6%) (Figure 2).
- Most patients who completed vPE agreed or strongly agreed the patient education video (± phonecall with a GC) helped me better understand the purpose of genetic testing (92%) and the potential outcomes of genetic testing (93%) (Figure 3).

Conclusions
- vPE improved patients’ understanding of genetic testing and enhanced OB/Gyn providers’ ability to build patients’ genetic literacy.

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