

APPENDIX 1 | Interview Guide

This is an interview conducted through the University of Kansas School of Medicine STORM project. The questions in this interview explore the following topics: referrals to and communication with specialists, utilization of telemedicine, and the role telemedicine has in providing specialty care in rural practice settings. This interview is designed to complement your survey responses, completed as Part 1 of this study. This study is designed to understand the needs of rural Kansas when it comes to specialty care and telemedicine from your perspective as a primary care provider. Your answers to this interview will be kept confidential and de-identified in conjunction with your survey responses. You may respond freely to the interview questions. You can choose to not respond to a question for any reason and can request to stop at any time. Thank you for your time and valuable participation.

Specialty Care in the Community

In the survey you took prior to this interview, you indicated how available various specialists were in your community. Tell me more about how your patients access specialty care.

Prompt: How do patients access specialty care that is not directly provided within your community?

Prompt: What are the biggest unmet specialty needs for your patients? For you as a provider?

Prompt: From your perspective, what are the consequences of these unmet needs?

On your survey, you indicated _____ as the specialty(s) you **refer to** most often. What are the primary reasons you refer patients to these specialists?

Prompt: For example, initial diagnosis, second opinion, care management, specialized procedure or treatment.

Prompt: Are referrals primarily for acute or chronic conditions?

Note: Encourage interviewee to elaborate on specific medical conditions, procedures, etc.

Patient Access to Specialists

What do you think about the relative value of specialists commuting to a given community compared to telemedicine visits (meaning patient-specialist interactions via videoconferencing)?

Prompt: For your patients, in what instances could telemedicine visits with a specialist be beneficial? How so?

Prompt: What areas or types of specialty visits and services *could be* provided via telemedicine?

In what specialty areas do you see telemedicine implementation being highest priority?

Prompt: Where do you see telemedicine *not* being beneficial?

Primary Care Provider-Specialist Communication

We've been discussing telemedicine as a means to improve *patient* access to specialists, but we are also interested in effective **provider-to-provider** communication between generalists and subspecialists.

On your survey, you were asked about communication with specialists. What are the primary

reasons you consult/communicate with these specialists?

Do you currently communicate with specialists in the most ideal way? Why do you say that?

Prompt: If not, how do you think your communication with specialists could be improved?

Prompt: What current communication modalities are available to you? How would you enhance these systems of communication?

Prompt: What role could telemedicine modalities have in improving this communication and collaboration?

Tell me about coordination of care for your patients. What is working well in the process of referral, visits with a specialist, follow up with primary care physician, and coordinated assessment and plan?

Prompt: What are the barriers to fully coordinated care?

Prompt: Are there ways telemedicine is currently helping to facilitate this process?

Prompt: What are the best ways to address barriers to coordinated care? Do these differ between types of referrals? What about acute vs chronic care?

Prompt: How can we improve videoconference visits with specialists to improve the delivery of coordinated care to your patients?

(If physician provides obstetrical care):

You indicated in your survey that you provide obstetrical care. How can telemedicine play a role in obstetrical care for your patients?

Prompt: What maternal-fetal medicine services would be useful to you if provided via telemedicine?

Prompt: What barriers do you see with providing obstetrical or maternal-fetal medicine expertise via telemedicine modalities?

Prompt: Other research has found that a lack of ultrasound technicians is a barrier to implementing bedside ultrasound telemedicine visits as images may be suboptimal to allow for adequate interpretation by an MFM.

What has been your experience with this?

How do you see this barrier being overcome?

I'm interested to know how you see increasing changes in technology affecting your practice.

Prompt: How might technological changes in healthcare enhance or disrupt your practice? In what ways?

Prompt: How do these changes affect rural communities in particular?

Prompt: What impact does technology have on your patients' health?

Finally, we know rural patients and providers face many issues. Where does telemedicine stand relative to other issues facing rural practice?

Thank you so much for your time and valuable input. Do you have any further comments on telemedicine as it pertains to providing specialty care to your patients?