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One Page Summary
2020 Endourology Summer Student Scholarship

This summer, my clinical research involvement at the University of Pennsylvania Department of Urology under the 2020 Endourology Society Summer Student Scholarship was moved from in-person to remote due to COVID-19, which has limited my access to certain projects. While I planned on performing multi-parametric MRI segmentations of tissues surrounding the prostate to potentially aid in the counseling of patients preoperatively, restrictions to remote-only work at the hospital delayed my access to the scans. In the meantime, I have collaborated with my team to generate new research studies in response to COVID-19. My attention quickly drew focus to one of the hottest topics in medicine: telehealth.

Over the past few months, we have been creating a survey to investigate how likely post-operative urologic patients are to continue using telemedicine appointments as an alternative to follow up office visits once social distancing restrictions are lifted. The survey includes questions on demographics, general health status and risk for COVID-19, cost and time savings, and patient views of telemedicine. The survey is being distributed to Dr. David Lee's patients who had telehealth follow up appointments after the onset of the pandemic in the US, from March 2020 to August 2020. We are currently in the process of calling patients to consent in order to participate in the study. For analysis, the number of patients willing to be scheduled for a future telemedicine appointment after the risk of infection with COVID-19 has declined will be totaled and stratified by number of COVID-19 risk factors, appointment cost (travel and time), confidence in care, previous experience with telemedicine, online literacy, etc. We are hopeful that the study will help in understanding if the accelerated adoption of telemedicine into clinical practice has affected how patients perceive their form of care. The results of this survey will help further elucidate patients preferences on telemedicine for future urological surgical visits. We plan to submit an abstract to the AUA come early November.

Another study centered around telemedicine that I have been working on investigates the patient experience during virtual surgical consults during COVID-19. Previous research has demonstrated patient satisfaction with telemedicine based surgical follow-up appointments, however, there is little information on patient perspectives specifically on telemedicine-based consultations. Patients that are considering a RARP as a potential treatment for localized PCa through a telemedicine consultation qualify in this study. After patients are consented and agree to participate in the study, the patients will be interviewed over the phone. The interview's purpose is to determine if and how patients make treatment decisions based on their virtual experiences with their care team. The interview will include questions related to the concerns related to COVID-19, perception of quality of care, treatment histories, and if the telemedicine appointment has impacted the patient's decision making. The interviews will take place after the surgical consultation and will be audio recorded and transcribed. The analysis will be mostly qualitative, with descriptive statistics used to summarize demographic and medical categories. We are optimistic that the results of this study will contribute a better understanding of patient perspectives on teleconsults prior to RARP and may inform the development of preoperative counseling tools to improve the experience. While both of these aforementioned studies are still in the data collection stages, I will continue to work with Penn on these projects throughout the fall.

My experience working with Dr. David Lee and the rest of the urology research team at PPMC has allowed me to learn how to develop my research skills through writing questionnaires/protocols and designing qualitative studies. As a hopeful medical student, I will continue to vigorously pursue research in the urology field throughout my academic career.