Telemedicine in Endocrine Patients During COVID-19

Abstract:

While telemedicine has been available for nearly 20 years, its widespread use has not been seen until the COVID-19 pandemic forced healthcare to function remotely. Endocrinology is a field that is particularly well suited to telemedicine as diagnoses and management is often reliant on laboratory data. Certainly, not all patients are appropriate for remote evaluation as a more accurate physical exam is sometimes necessary. Particular areas of concern may be palpation of the thyroid and assessment of diabetic neuropathy, as these are lost in a virtual visit. Many routine visits, however can be well managed remotely. Telehealth enables the physican and patient to review together the patients’ personal and family histories, medication use and compliance, symptoms, and concerns in a face to face visit. Access to a laboratory and imaging center is often necessary to evaluate thyroid, pituitary, bone and adrenal disorders. Remote uploading of glucometers and insulin pumps have already become commonplace, allowing for routine management of diabetes to be a practical use of telemedicine. Potential problems include access to imaging and high-volume surgeons if needed. Clinical and economic outcomes of telemedicine care should be studied to help establish standards of care for telemedicine in endocrinology.