

Virtual care solutions to support youth with pain and their families during COVID and beyond



Pain is one of the most common symptoms that youth experience when dealing with stressful events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

- ★ At least two million Canadian youth already have chronic pain.
- ★ They are more likely to experience mental health concerns now...
- ★ ...and have pain, mental health concerns, and misuse drugs as adults.

We need to treat new and pre-existing pain **now** to prevent lifelong issues for our youth.

✓ OUR GOAL

To identify recommendations for virtual care for youth <18 years old with pain and their families, like using apps, websites, or therapy over video call.

✓ OUR PROCESS

Our team of youth, parents, healthcare providers, and researchers conducted a rapid systematic review and found 16 relevant scientific articles published in the past 10 years.

What we know about Virtual Care for youth with chronic pain and their families:

Leveraging Virtual Care

- is acceptable, reasonable and effective
- ensures better access to care (particularly rural or remote areas)
- is under-utilized (especially for real-time symptom assessment and psychological treatment)



Implementing Virtual Care

- should be freely available across all technologies (including telephone, apps, websites, video- conference)
- needs to include training, terms of use, and guidelines for health professionals, youth and families
- must use secure infrastructure (encrypted, password protected, authorized access)
- should be developmentally appropriate
- must meet ethical standards of care
- should be transparent in communication (therapist vs. computer-generated messaging)

Best Platforms for Virtual Care

- need to be user-friendly and acceptable to youth and families
- must be backed by science
- should involve youth, families, and health professionals in their development
- should be individualized or customizable
- must be comprehensive in terms of pain management (provide pharmacological, psychological, and physical strategies)
- need to use multimedia content (videos, text, images)
- must meet accessibility standards
- should be able to integrate social and peer support

Identified Gaps in Virtual Care

- requires standardized practice guidelines for implementation and evaluation
- must have evidence showing its effectiveness for all concerns identified by youth and families
- needs to include knowledge about its limitations and suitability for all aspects of care (such as physical exam)
- need to consider potential harms and impact on the therapeutic relationship
- requires strategies to enhance engagement
- needs integration into clinical care pathways, face-to-face care, and electronic medical record

What's next?

A range of **virtual care solutions** will be identified in an 'evidence and gap map' to best support the individual pain, mental health, and substance use needs of youth with chronic pain and their families.

Want to learn more?

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#partneringforpain