

Post-discharge Program for Visually Impaired Veterans

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Long Beach VA - Low Vision Rehabilitation

- Government medical center for inpatient and outpatient Veterans with acquired or progressive eye disease and disorders
- Comprehensive low vision rehabilitation, including Continuum of Care from visual impairment to total blindness

Mission: To assist eligible Veterans and active duty service members with a visual impairment in developing skills needed for personal independence and successful reintegration into the community and family environment.

Core Values: Servicing Veterans with (I-CARE) Integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect, and excellence.

(US Department of Veteran Affairs, 2022; VA Blind Rehabilitation Services Website, 2022).

Identified Needs

- Training and education on the comorbidities of low vision
- Resource and support for continued care following discharge of skilled services
- Social support programs and services for patients that cannot drive

Literature Review

Expansion of Continued Care Health Services

- Approximately 9 million Veterans who rely on the VA for specialty care experience lack of continuity between VA facilities (Farmer et al., 2016).
- It is necessary to optimize existing services to expand the reach for Veterans seeking services for mental health and continued care(Farmer et al., 2016).

Telehealth for Patients with Higher Levels of Need

- Older Veterans needing higher level of care were unaware of the availability of telehealth services (Ferguson et al., 2020).
- Telehealth has the potential to provide quality care; it provides better access to health services, is convenient, and reduces stress (Gajarawala & Pelkowski, 2021).
- VA must improve dissemination of telehealth through education and enrollment so that Veterans can utilize its services (Gray et al., 2022).

Services to Address Comorbidities of Low Vision

- Approximately 1 in 3 Veterans referred to outpatient vision rehabilitation have detectable cognitive impairments (Whitson et al., 2020).
- Individuals who are unable to address their comorbidities had higher prevalence for requiring increased levels of care, caregiver support, and decreased ability to follow their medical plan (Stika et al., 2021).

Learning Objectives

- Develop a post-discharge program for Veterans with low vision deficits to increase awareness and knowledge of available resources so that their needs are continuously met
- Implement and Evaluate the post-discharge program to determine its effectiveness in ensuring Veterans needs are met
- Obtain advanced clinical knowledge and skill in low vision therapy

Project Description and Implementation

Purpose: To advocate for visually impaired Veterans through the development, implementation, and evaluation of a post-discharge program thru:

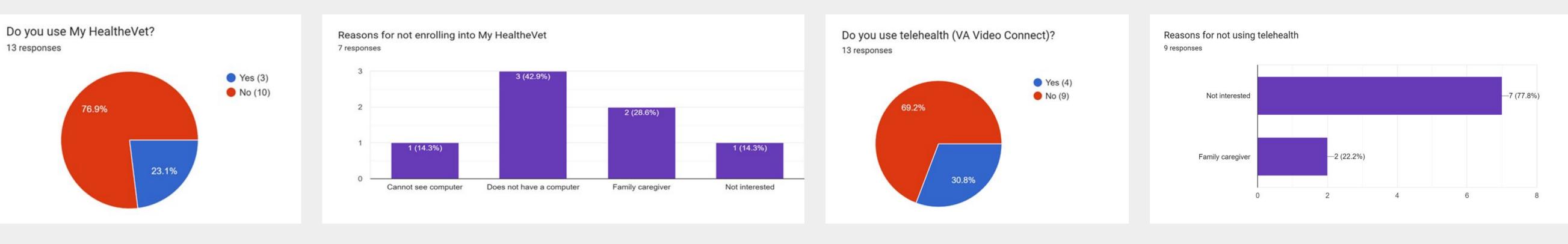
- Resource manual with resources to address the comorbidities of low vision
- Education and opportunities for enrollment into My HealtheVet and telehealth
- Access to continued care services so that needs are continuously met

healthevet

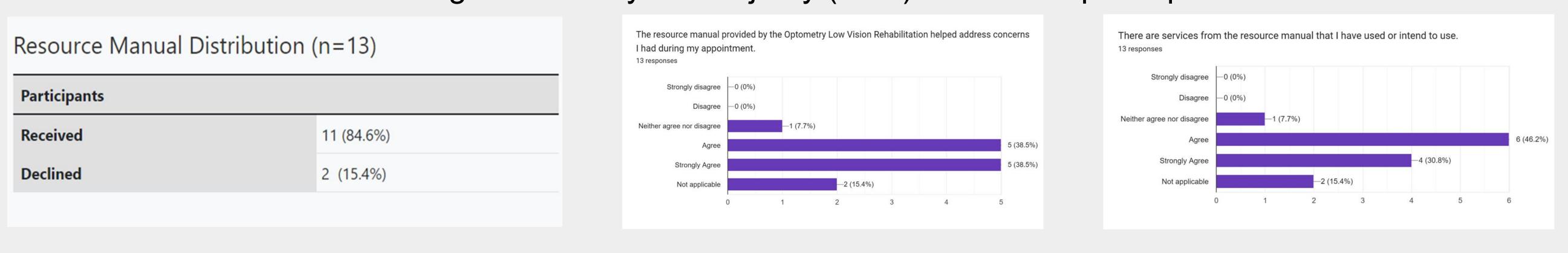
Evaluation and Outcomes

Evaluation Method: Semi-structured interview using pre / post-test questionnaire

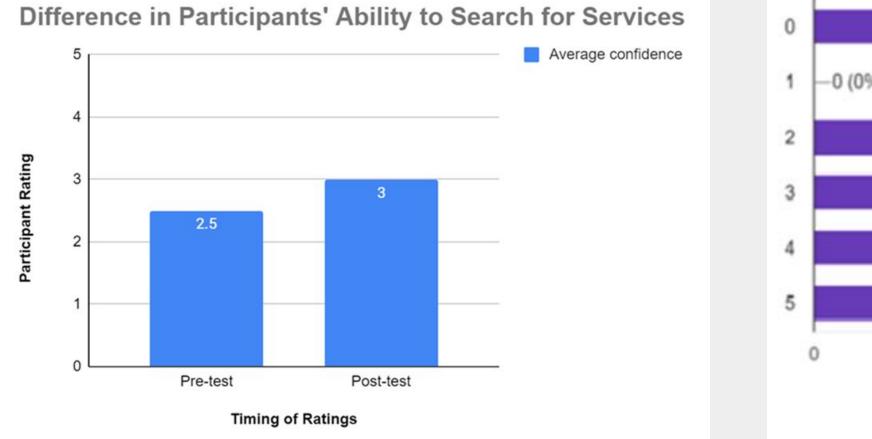
- Outcomes
- Common themes were identified as barriers that limited enrollment into My HealtheVet and telehealth
 - Not having/no long able to see a computer; family caregiver manages medical responsibilities; not interested

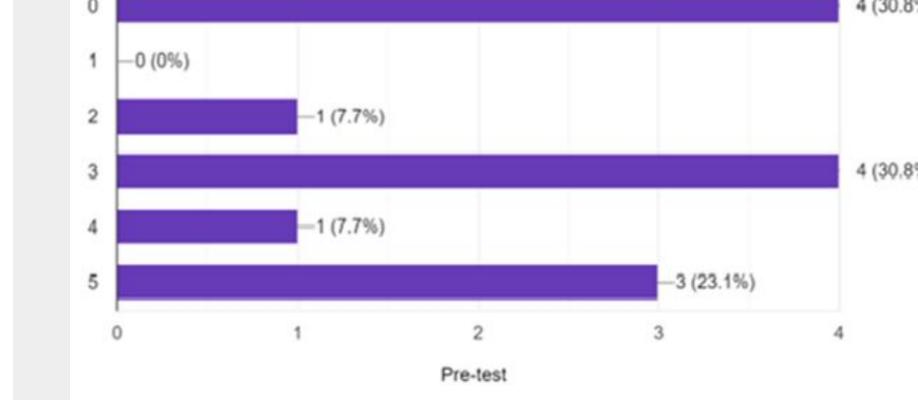


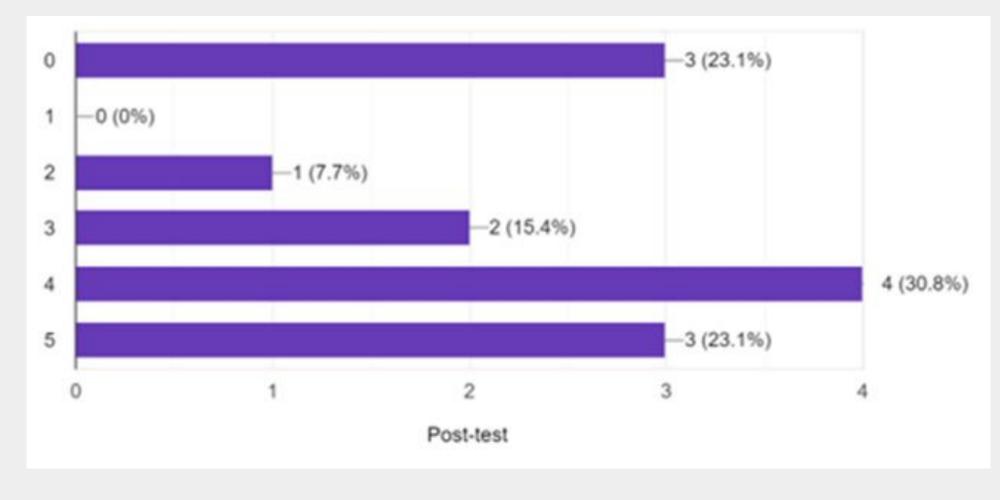
o The resource manual received high interest by the majority (85%) of the total participants



20% improvement in participant's confidence level in searching for services for their visual impairment







Scholarly Deliverables

- Expand My HealtheVet and telehealth services by educating and enrolling Veterans into the program
- Create a resource manual on Low Vision Rehabilitation to be published onto My HealtheVet and for physical distribution



Discussion and Implications

- The statistics demonstrates the necessity for post-discharge services for low vision
 - Crucial resource in addressing the comorbidities of low vision
- Participants used a variety of services to address their concerns
- 90.9% found the resource manual useful and have used/intend to use
- 100% of participants agree that the LVR provides them with tools/resource to help them with their low vision deficits
- Several barriers limiting My HealtheVet and telehealth enrollment
- Limitations include time, small sample size, and gaps in research directly studying post-discharge services for Low Vision Rehabilitation
- Post-discharge program will help bridge occupational therapists with multidisciplinary group of low vision specialist to maximize patient quality of life
- Future research is needed with a larger sample size and duration to determine the effectiveness of post-discharge services to address the comorbidities of low vision

Recognition

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References

Available upon request