



**Stacie L. Ong, BA; Ariel Leong, BS; Quan L. Tran, BA; Madeline Ryu, BS**

## **PILOTING A TELEHEALTH MODEL FOR DELIVERING MENTAL HEALTH CARE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

The Cardinal Free Clinics' (CFC) Mental Health Clinic (MHC) is a monthly student-run clinic that provides psychiatric care to underserved populations and mental health educational experiences for undergraduate and medical students. MHC services include psychiatric evaluations, affordable medication prescriptions, and referrals for long-term care. Since its inception in 2007, MHC has operated in-person at locations in East Palo Alto and San Jose. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated the temporary closure of in-person clinics.

To address the growing need for psychiatric care during the pandemic, we piloted a telehealth MHC clinic. Herein, we describe the telehealth model, which we successfully implemented for two clinics so far. We discuss efforts to gauge patient perspective on receiving psychiatric care via telehealth and the potential for telehealth to remain the main platform for MHC after the pandemic.

The MHC telehealth model is based on the established CFC General Clinic Telehealth model. It involves multiple breakout rooms on Zoom to maintain patient privacy. The flow involves a patient interview with the preclinical student and psychiatric resident, presentation to the attending, and discussion of a care plan with the patient. Moving forward, we plan to expand our patient load and assess patients' perspective of the telehealth MHC through a sixteen-question survey.

The telehealth model can potentially increase access to mental health services by eliminating the need for transportation to a physical clinic. We hope to share this model with other free clinics, so that psychiatric services will be available during the pandemic for underserved populations.

**COMMUNITY PARTNER**  
**CARDINAL FREE CLINICS**