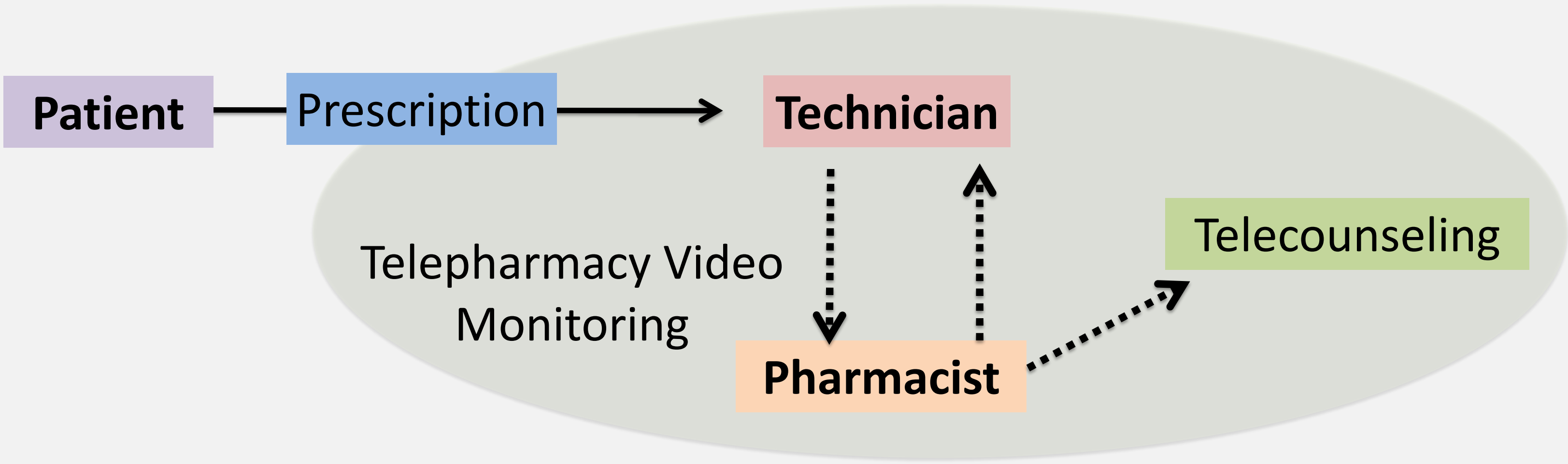


Background

- Telepharmacy is the dispensing of medications through the use of telecommunications and information technologies to patients at a distance. Telepharmacy provides an option for the delivery of pharmacy services in rural areas that would not otherwise support the cost of hiring a pharmacist.
- Pharmacy best practices and state pharmacy law dictate that medication counseling be provided with all new prescriptions filled in the community telepharmacy.
- In our rural setting, medication counseling is routinely offered but the rate of acceptance is low.

Figure 1. Telepharmacy Workflow



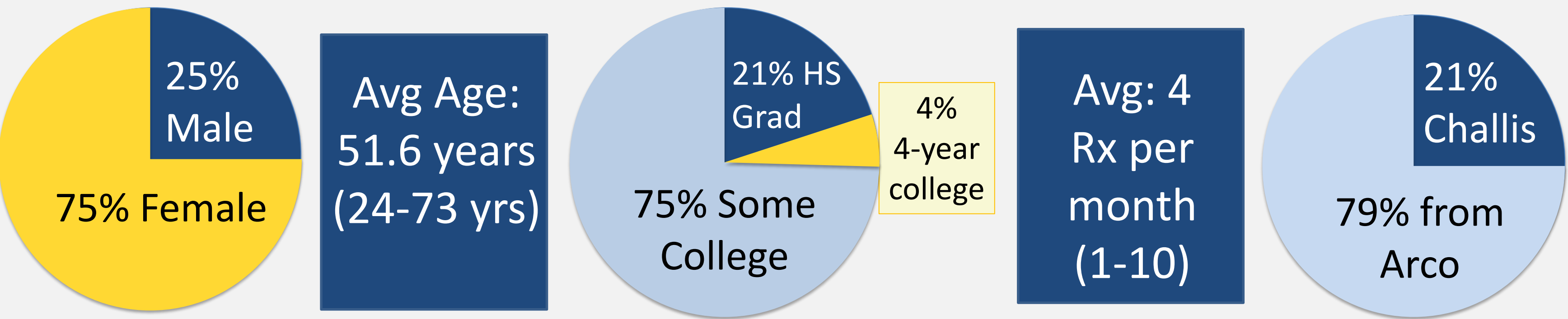
Objective

To examine perceived barriers to medication counseling in the rural community telepharmacy as identified by pharmacists, technicians and patients.

Methods

- A structured survey was developed by the pharmacist to assess potential causes for patient reluctance to receive telecounseling.
- Interviews were conducted with pharmacy technicians at the telepharmacy sites to refine the patient survey.
- Surveys were distributed by pharmacy technicians to patients \geq age 18 that picked up prescriptions at the telepharmacy sites.

Figure 2: Patient Demographics (n=24)



Results

Table 1. Utilization of Counseling Services

| Question (n = 24) | Response |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Are you aware that a pharmacist is available for telecounseling? | 100% |
| Do technicians ask if you would like to speak with a pharmacist? | |
| • Yes, every time I come in | 21 (88%) |
| • Yes, most times I come in | 2 (8%) |
| • Yes, some times I come in | 1 (4%) |
| • No | 0 (0%) |
| Do you feel comfortable or think you would feel comfortable using a separate medication education room to speak with a pharmacist? | Yes: 21 (87.5%) No: 3 (12.5%) |
| What might make you more comfortable with and more likely to use medication education room to speak with a pharmacist? | |
| • Using a phone with a video connection for more privacy | 3 (12.5%) |
| • Nothing, it's great the way it is | 15 (62.5%) |
| • Nothing, I don't like the idea of going into the education room | 3 (12.5%) |
| • Other | 3 (12.5%) |
| Have you ever spoken with a pharmacist in Pocatello about your medications? | Yes: 12 (50%) No: 12 (50%) |

Figure 2. Free Response Comments about Telecounseling

Was there a particular reason you did not speak with a pharmacist and what would make you more likely to accept counseling?

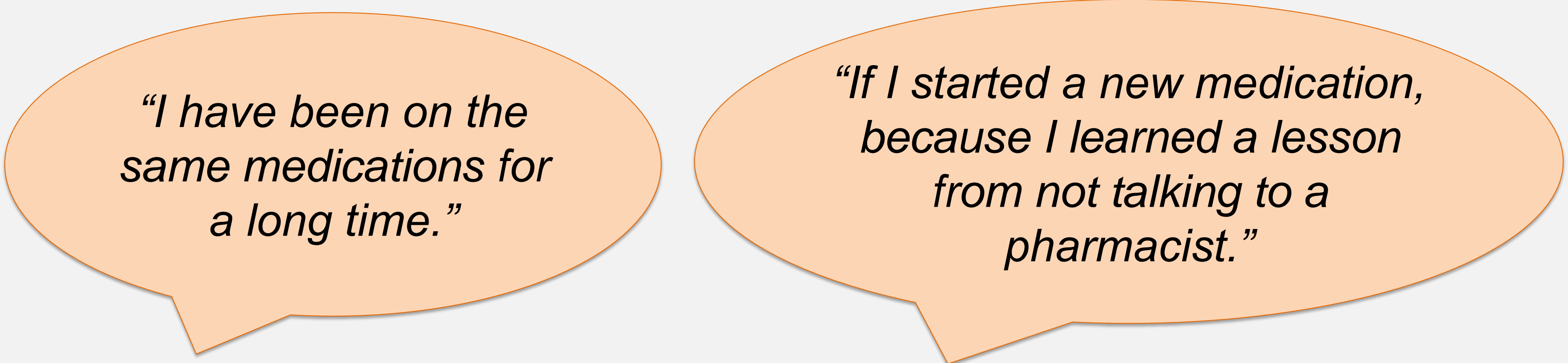


Table 2. Patients Who Received Telecounseling

| Question (n = 12) | Response |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Rate your satisfaction with your medication education experience (1-10) | 7.57 (1-10) |
| Were you told about your medication by: (Mark all that apply) | |
| • Phone | 7 (58%) |
| • Video | 4 (33%) |
| • In-person | 3 (25%) |
| Were you given a choice between phone and video counseling? | Yes: 8 (67%) No: 4 (33%) |
| If you chose phone over video, was there a particular reason? (n=10) | |
| • It seemed faster | 5 (50%) |
| • It seemed more private | 4 (40%) |
| • It was the only option given | 1 (10%) |
| If you chose video over phone, was there a particular reason? (n=4) | |
| • It seemed more personal | 3 (75%) |
| • I was learning about a device (inhaler) and wanted to be shown its use | 0 (0%) |
| • It was the only option given | 1 (25%) |
| Are you likely to speak to a pharmacist about your medication in the future? | Yes: 7 (58%) No: 5 (42%) |

Results, Continued

Table 3. Patients Who Have Not Received Telecounseling

| Question (n = 13) | Response |
|--|----------|
| Was there a particular reason you did not speak to the pharmacist? (Mark all that apply) (n=13*) | |
| • My doctor or nurse already told me about the medication | 10 |
| • I've had the same prescriptions for years and rarely have new ones | 5 |
| • Another person picks up my medications | 3 |
| • I had apprehensions about the degree of privacy available | 2 |
| • I didn't know the service was available | 1 |
| • The process seemed time-consuming or difficult | 1 |
| • I wasn't comfortable with using the separate medication education room | 1 |
| • I don't feel this would be a valuable service for me | 0 |
| • I was offered "medication counseling" and was unfamiliar with the term | 0 |
| What would make you more likely to speak with a pharmacist? (Mark all that apply) (n=15**) | |
| • If I started a new medication | 13 |
| • Nothing, I'm not interested in speaking with the pharmacist | 3 |
| • If the offer were worded differently | 2 |
| • If I felt more confident in my privacy | 2 |
| • If the pharmacist called me a few days after starting a medication | 2 |
| • If the pharmacist spoke with me as I waited for my medication to be filled | 2 |
| • If the service were regularly offered by the technician | 1 |
| • If the pharmacist called me at home | 1 |
| • If I didn't have to use the separate education room | 0 |
| * Includes one patient who has been counseled | |
| ** Includes two patients who have been counseled | |

Discussion and Conclusions

- Patient engagement through surveys helps improve the pharmacist's understanding of the barriers to providing education.
- Small sample size of surveys may have provided an incomplete picture of community-wide reasons for a patient's lack of engagement with telepharmacy medication counseling.
- Direct application of data from one site to another may not address the needs of a specific community as responses varied slightly between communities.
- Participants commonly cited having received medication information from their provider as a reason for not speaking with a pharmacist, but were most likely to utilize telecounseling if they begin a new medication.
- Perceived length of time required to provide services may lead some patients to prefer phone over video counseling. Perceived level of privacy may also play into this decision.

Future Directions

- Telecounseling preferences of each community could be elicited and incorporated into workflow prior to opening new telepharmacy sites.