

Abstract

The work/life (working life versus home or personal life) balance of genetic counselors (GCs) can be affected by the mode of their patient interactions and in particular tele-counseling practices, more generally known as telehealth. Genetic counselors have long been using a variety of service delivery models for several years. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic (beginning in 2020), most genetic counselors have had to work remotely or utilize primarily telehealth services for several months. Other professions, students, and professors have noted that working virtually has been mentally/emotionally difficult and disruptive of their work/life balance. Until this study, research had not focused on how telehealth practices emotionally/mentally affected GCs and their work/life balance. This study contacted fifty GCs from across the state of Indiana to ask for participation in a survey on work/life balance. The survey focused on a series of Likert and free response questions and prompts pertaining to genetic counseling practices; perspectives of telehealth; opinions on patients' perspectives of telehealth; and the impact of telehealth, in general, as well as on mental health status. A total of 42% of those contacted completed the survey. Some of the key results included 1) 28% of respondents noted a lack of separation between home and work since beginning telehealth; and 2) conducting telehealth has not negatively affected their own mental health status. Future research would allow for a greater understanding of whether the genetic counselors, as a unique and specialized profession, have personality traits and strategies that allow them to better handle the stresses of telehealth interactions and practices versus the general public.

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