

Chapter 12

The Benefits and Limitations of Telemedicine During COVID-19: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

Telehealth is effective in preventing, treating, and taking precautions to avoid spreading of coronavirus. Telehealth allows people with symptoms to stay at home by helping them to communicate with doctors through the internet. This decreases the spreading of corona virus to large number of people and hospital staff. But when it comes to treatment of patients, telemedicine does have some limitations. Medicines given through telemedicine may not be consistent to patients who have chronic disorders and makes the patients' conditions serious, which leads them to hospitalization. The most significant limitation of telemedicine is that some hospitals do not have equipment to deliver care in this manner. In the present situation of COVID-19, the existing telemedicine has to be modified for helping quick testing and to diagnose the infection to take care of the patients. Hence, some of the benefits and limitations of telemedicine have been summarized.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-7685-4.ch012

INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease is a infections disease which is caused by a virus. So far 75,536,181 infections have been reported leading to 1,673,132 deaths worldwide. Almost 2.5 million people got infected by the virus leading to 17500 deaths worldwide. Number of infected people and death rate has been increasing day by day. Maintaining social distance is reducing transmission from person to person and the number of infections and death rate (Chen, 2020, WHO, 2019, Poletti, 2009). The distance between people is difficult to maintain more than 1-m in the area of high density populations. Hence countries having dense population will have more risk of corona infection (Rockloy & Sjodin, 2020). The healthcare systems face difficulties in capacity and accessibility in the countries which are having low resources. Hospitals which are not provided with ventilators, ICU beds and sufficient staff can not handle the pandemic. As many healthcare personnel are being infected, many hospitals are not willing to give their services fearing that they might be exposed to coronavirus (Ishita Mandrekar, 2020). Hence people with other illnesses are avoided without providing any treatment. However, in chronic ailments like diabetes, lung diseases, heart problems, cancer and mental health problems regular medical check up is needed. It is a great challenge to ensure primary healthcare needs in the present COVID-19 situation.

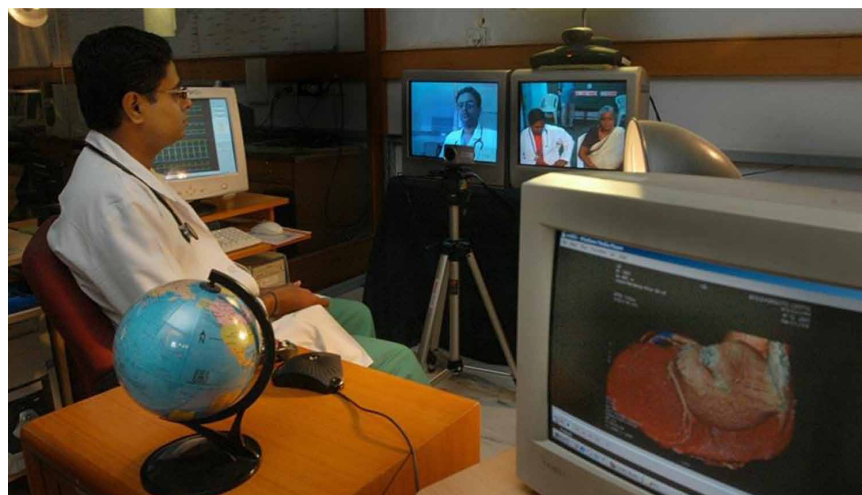
Telemedicine plays a major role in providing primary healthcare needs in many countries during this crisis. Telemedicine is a technology which provides consultation with a doctor from a distance place and doctor can establish a two-way communication by using the information and communication technology.

The doctor provides health advice to the patient who is residing in a remote place after discussing with the patient (figure.1). The conversation can be audio visual through tablets, smart phones, laptops or desktop computers. This helps the doctor and patient to see each other, which looks like a real health consultation. Apart from this communication can also be done through audio communication or text messaging through mobile phones.

The main objective of present article is to make the people aware about the benefits and limitations of telemedicine in the present situation of COVID-19.

Figure 1.

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