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Teledermatology in Times of COVID -19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Teledermatology is the need of every dermatologist in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. Teledermatology will help to provide skin care to the patients in the time of pandemic and will also help to prevent the spread of COVID infection.

Key words: COVID-19; Internet; Pandemics; Remote Consultation

Dear Editor,

Teledermatology is an important sub- specialty of dermatology. By using teledermatology we can prevent transmission of COVID-19 infection.

During the times of outbreak of COVID-19 or other infectious diseases, implementation of infection prevention and control (IPC) is of great value in healthcare settings, especially regarding personal protection of healthcare workers.¹ Wu et al have reported the problems relating to COVID-19 IPC in healthcare settings, highlighting the personal protection of healthcare workers.² In teledermatology, telecommunication technologies are being used to transfer clinical information over varying distances through audio, visual and data communication. Teledermatology is not a new thing and it was first used in 1995. Perednia and Brown first coined the term "Teledermatology."³ Teleconsultations saves time and increases the chances of access to one or more consultants as the patient or referring doctor likes, irrespective of the remoteness between the two.⁴

Benefits of Teledermatology

- Prevents hospital acquired infections
- No waiting period
- Patient does not need to travel

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- Availability of dermatological services even in lockdown period
- Dermatologists can earn from home
- Physicians don't have to wear PPE kits and work
- Immunocompromised patients are not exposed to crowds
- Good for follow up cases
- Skin diseases like Acne, Melasma, Tinea Corporis etc, where diagnosis can be made easily on observation are easy to treat by teledermatology.
- Minor skin diseases can be treated at home by teledermatology and serious conditions requiring immediate care can be given appointment. For example, Acne can be treated at home with help of teledermatology but a case of Pemphigus vulgaris can be called at skin out patient department.

Drawbacks of Teledermatology

- Requires a good smart phone or laptop
- Requires high speed internet
- Misdiagnosis
- Technical failure

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- Medico legal issues
- Cosmetic procedures and dermatosurgery cannot be done.
- Lack of infrastructure for basic investigation for example, wood's lamp examination
- Few skin conditions like Melanoma that require physical examination cannot be managed properly by teledermatology
- Patient having genital lesions don't feel very comfortable
- Patients in rural areas of developing countries are not able to use teledermatology platform for consultation.

Discussion

The aim of the teledermatology is to provide the highest quality of skin care more efficiently by moving

patient information. Du Moulin et al⁵ noticed that eczema and follicular lesions were diagnosed with relatively more certainty. Kaliyadan et al⁶ observed that diagnoses were made with more certainty in cases like viral warts, herpes zoster, acne vulgaris, irritant dermatitis, vitiligo, and superficial bacterial and fungal infections. Critical care patients in dermatology is best not taken up for teledermatology. The current corona virus disease has forced the closure of many nonessential services around the world. Dermatology is a field where most of the diagnosis can be made visually. So keeping pandemic in mind, we should encourage the use of teledermatology.

Conclusion

Teledermatology can be a very important tool for dermatologists in COVID- 19 pandemic.

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