

<https://doi.org/10.3126/njdvl.v18i1.30473>

Tele dermatology in Times of COVID -19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Tele dermatology is the need of every dermatologist in the time of COVID-19 pandemic. Tele dermatology 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,

Tele dermatology is an important sub- specialty of dermatology. By using tele dermatology 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 tele dermatology, telecommunication technologies are being used to transfer clinical information over varying distances through audio, visual and data communication. Tele dermatology is not a new thing and it was first used in 1995. Perednia and Brown first coined the term "Tele dermatology."³ Tele consultations 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 Tele dermatology

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

Financial disclosure: None.

Conflict of interest to disclosure: None declared.

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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 tele dermatology.
- Minor skin diseases can be treated at home by tele dermatology and serious conditions requiring immediate care can be given appointment. For example, Acne can be treated at home with help of tele dermatology but a case of Pemphigus vulgaris can be called at skin out patient department.

Drawbacks of Tele dermatology

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

Submitted: 3rd July 2020

Accepted: 15th July 2020

Published: 7th October 2020

How to cite this article

Henry D, Henry D. Tele dermatology in Times of Covid -19. Nepal Journal of Dermatology, Venereology and Leprology 2020;18(1):93-4. <https://doi.org/10.3126/njdvl.v18i1.30473>



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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 tele dermatology
- Patient having genital lesions don't feel very comfortable
- Patients in rural areas of developing countries are not able to use tele dermatology platform for consultation.

Discussion

The aim of the tele dermatology 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 tele dermatology. 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 tele dermatology.

Conclusion

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

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