



TELEDERMATOLOGY: AN EFFECTIVE APPLICATION TO PROPITIATE COVID-19

Dermatology

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ABSTRACT

The Coronavirus Disease (covid-19) Has Become A Global Pandemic. In The Absence Of Any Targeted Therapy Or Vaccine To Stop The Spread Of Novel Corona Virus (sars-cov-2; 2019-ncov), Measures Of Protection And Prevention Such As Hand Washing, Sanitization, Masks, Screening, Social Distancing, And Isolation And Quarantine Have Shown To Be Efficient In Controlling The Disease. Dermatologists Must Work With The Aim To Mitigate The Spread Of The Virus. Dermatologists Must Consider The Strategies To Prevent Outpatients From Coming To Their Clinic/hospital Potentially Exposing Themselves Or Others By Rescheduling Non-urgent Appointments And Procedures. Telemedicine May Be Of Particular Use For This Specially For Patients At Higher Risk Of Infection (the Elderly And Those With Other Associated Comorbidities) And For Non-urgent Appointments.

KEYWORDS

Teledermatology, Coronavirus Disease, Dermatologist Perspective

The Coronavirus Disease (covid-19), Caused By A Novel Corona Virus (sars-cov-2; 2019-ncov), Is Presenting A Severe Challenge To Global Health Care Affecting More Than 213 Countries. The Majority Of Patients Affected Are Aged Between 30 To 80 Years, Showing Higher Morbidity And Mortality Specially In Patients Above 50 Years Of Age More So With Associated Comorbidities.¹ On 11 March 2020, Covid-19 Was Declared A Pandemic By Who. As On 9th April, 2020, There Were 1610909 Confirmed Cases Of Covid-19 All Over The World With 99690 Confirmed Deaths, Affecting 213 Countries.² In The Absence Of Any Targeted Therapy Or Vaccine To Stop The Spread Of Covid-19, Measures Of Protection Such As Hand Washing, Sanitization, Masks, Screening, Social Distancing And Above All Isolation, And Quarantine Have Shown To Be Efficient In Controlling The Disease, Particularly In The Early Stages.

Dermatologist's Role

Dermatologists Must Work With The Aim To Mitigate The Spread Of The Virus And Try To Keep Illness At Bay So That The Health Care System Is Not Overburdened. Dermatology Practices As Vectors For Covid-19 Transmission Has Been Suggested And A Call For An Immediate Cessation Of Non-emergent Dermatology Visits Is Made.³ **Protection Of Self And Your Clinic/hospital Workforce Is Also Your Responsibility.** Dermatologists Must Consider The Strategies To Prevent Outpatients From Coming To Clinic/hospital Potentially Exposing Themselves Or Others By Rescheduling Non-urgent Appointments And Procedures. Rescheduling Appointments For Elderly Patients Older Than 65, Especially Those With Underlying Morbidities Such As Diabetes Or Congestive Heart Failure, Should Be A Priority. Emergency Outpatient And Inpatient Consultations Must Be Done With Proper Protection Using Mask And Personal Protective Equipment And An Emphasis On Social Distancing.

Teledermatology

With The Emergence Of Sars-cov-2 Virus Causing Covid-19 Pandemic, There Is Need To Use Technology To Help Patients With Mild Symptoms At Homes While Providing Access To Medical Care Maintaining Social Distancing Thus Limiting Community Spread Of The Virus As Well As Limiting The Exposure To Other Patients And Clinic Staff Members. Telemedicine Refer To The Exchange Of Medical Information From One Side To Other Through Electronic Communication To Improve Patient's Health. Telemedicine May Be Of Particular Use For Patients At Higher Risk Of Infection (the Elderly And Those With Other Health Issues) And For Non-urgent Appointments. This Will Also Help Promote The Social Distancing. Through Teledermatology, Beneficiaries Can Receive A Wider Range Of Services From Their Doctors Without Having To Travel To A Healthcare Facility.

Dermatologists May Use An Interactive Audio And Video Telecommunication System That Permits Real Time Communication

Between Physician And Patient At Home To Provide Telehealth. Popular Applications That Allow For Video Chats, Including Apple Facetime, Facebook Messenger Video Chat, Google Hangouts Video, Or Skype May Be Used To Provide Telehealth Consultations. Physicians Should Not Use Facebook Live, Twitch, Tiktok, Or Other Public-facing Communication Services.⁴ Physicians Are Encouraged, But Not Necessarily Required, To Notify Patients Of The Potential Security Risks Of Using These Services And To Seek Additional Privacy Protections. Health Insurance Portability And Accountability Act (1996) (hipaa) Is United States Legislation That Provides Data Privacy And Security Provisions For Safeguarding Medical Information. Other Vendors Offering Free Hipaa-compliant Platforms Specifically To Dermatologists Include Azova And The American Academy's Accessderm Platform- Medweb.⁴

Telemedicine Consultation Should Not Be Anonymous And Both Patient And Physician Need To Know Each Other's Identity. If The Patient Is A Minor, Teleconsultation Is Allowed Only In The Presence Of An Adult Guardian Whose Identity Needs To Be Ascertained. Patient's Consent Is Necessary For Any Telemedicine Consultation. Consent Will Be Implied If Patient Initiates The Consultation. Explicit Consent Is Needed If A Caregiver/ Health Care Worker/ Physician Initiates The Consultation And It Can Be Sought Through Email, Text, Audio Or Video Message.⁵ Gather Sufficient Medical Information About The Patient's Condition Before Making A Diagnosis And Initiating Treatment. If Any Investigations Are Needed, They Can Be Recommended Online. Dermatologist Should Not Proceed If A Reasonable Impression About The Diagnosis Can Not Be Made Based On Available Information Or In Case Where A Physical Examination Is Deemed Necessary. Tele-prescription Will Carry The Same Professional Accountability As The Traditional In-person Consultation And Should Be Done With An Appropriate Diagnosis/ Provisional Diagnosis.

Teledermatology Services Can Be Performed In One Of Two Ways:⁶ 1. Store And Forward (asynchronous) Where Patient Submits A Digital Image Of The Lesion Or Pre-recorded Video For The Physician To Review And Provide Advice, 2. Live Interactive (synchronous), Where A Real-time Live Two-way Interaction (video Chat) Between The Physician And Patient Takes Place About The Disease/problem. Dermatologists Should Code For These Services With Telehealth Codes Wherever Available. The Virtual Encounter (electronic Communication) May Be Started By The Dermatologist Or The Patient. It Has Been Reported That Results From Live-interactive And Standard Care Were Comparable With Regard To Feasibility And Accuracy.⁷ However, The Efficacy Of Teledermatology Depends On Quality Of Video, Images Sent And Patients Compliance. Dermatologists Can Bill For Telehealth Visits For Any Patient In Any Location As Those Restrictions Have Been Lifted. These Visits Are

Considered The Same As In-person Visits And May Be Chargeable At The Same Rate As Regular In-person Visits. Hence, Dermatologists Can Now Provide Telehealth Services From Their Home While Continuing To Bill From Their Currently Enrolled Practice Location.

Online Consultation (teledermatology) For Mild And Non-emergency Patients Has Obviously Decreased The Number Of Patients In Dermatology Clinics During The Epidemic Period, Which Reduces The Probability Of Nosocomial Infection Of 2019-ncov. Patients Requiring Emergency Medical Support Are Not Subject To The Restrictions On Social Distancing And Travel. Such Patients Therefore May Be Attended In Person After Taking Due Precautions For Proper Treatment.

CONCLUSION

At Present, The Goal Of Every Physician, Patient, And Institution Should Be To Do Whatever Is Necessary To Slowdown The Spread Of The Coronavirus. A Reduction In Hospital Visits And Face-to-face Consultation Will Definitely Reduce The Risk Of Infection To Other Persons And Will Also Help In Keeping Illness At Bay So That The Health Care System Is Not Overwhelmed. This Can Be Achieved Through Teledermatology Specially In Light Of The Presently Significantly Relaxed Regulations On Telemedicine. It Will Also Help In Providing Continuous, Dermatological Services For Patients Affected By Chronic Diseases.

Conflict Of Interest Disclosures: None

Source Of Funding: None

Disclaimer: The Views Expressed Herein Represent The Opinions Of The Authors

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