
Abstract

Teledermatology in German-Speaking Countries: Patients' and Physicians' Perspectives

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Abstract

Background: With increasing digitalization and the current pandemic, teledermatology has gained importance in German-speaking countries in recent years. The regulation on remote consultation methods was recently relaxed, allowing for a more widespread introduction of teledermatological health care services.

Objective: The aim of this work is to evaluate a store-and-forward (SAF) teledermatology application from the patients' and physicians' perspectives.

Methods: We carried out a noncontrolled user survey of the web-based platform *derma2go* in the course of the remote consultation by German dermatologists. Through the platform, patients with dermatological requests could obtain expert advice within a few hours after entering their medical history and uploading photographs of their skin lesions.

Results: A total of 1476 (t1) and 361 (t2) patients and 2207 dermatologist ratings were included within the evaluation. A large proportion of participants were satisfied with the application (t1=83.9%; t2=81.2%). Most participants also rated the usability as high (t1=83.0% satisfied) and were satisfied with the response time of the dermatologists (t1=92.0% satisfied). In addition, a large majority agreed with the statement that they trusted the web-based application (t1=90.5%). At t2, 20.0% of those who participated stated that their skin problem had healed; for 49.8% of participants, it had already improved; for 22.0% of participants, it was unchanged; and for 3.5% of participants, skin problems had worsened. For 64.0% of users, the request was completely resolved, and for 24.2% of users, it was partly resolved as result of the consultation. For 79.7% of users, no additional information was needed by the participating dermatologists. From the practitioners' perspective, 71.2% of all requests were completely resolved and 24.7% were partly resolved.

Conclusions: Our evaluation has shown that SAF applications, exemplified by *derma2go*, are likely to improve access to dermatological care, with a high patient satisfaction and a high rate of resolved requests, from the patients' and physicians' perspectives. In the future, teledermatological SAF applications can represent a supplement to the existing routine care in dermatology. The indications, patient groups, and use cases, for which the application is particularly suitable, will be determined in further studies.

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KEYWORDS

teledermatology; telemedicine; COVID-19; pandemic; store-and-forward; synchronous; asynchronous

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