
Abstract

eHealth in Norway Before and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Background: Regular teledermatology services were implemented in Norway in the early 1990s. Based on the available technology at the time, live interactive video consultation systems were implemented to facilitate remote consultations between dermatologists and general practitioners. With the introduction of digital cameras some years later, store-and-forward systems were introduced, but the live video systems remained popular. In the 2000s and early 2010s, there were few changes in the volume of Norwegian teledermatology services. During the 2010s, private teledermatology companies emerged, which provided both store-and-forward and live interactive video consultations. While previous services involved specialists and general practitioners, the new services now offered to patients enable them to interact with dermatologists directly.

Objective: This lecture aimed to provide a brief overview of the development of telemedicine in Norway before and during the COVID-19 pandemic with special focus on teledermatology.

Methods: This lecture provides a brief history of telemedicine in Norway with special attention to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The content is based on personal experiences and literature references.

Results: The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on all parts of society. In Norway, it has also affected the way telemedicine is practiced. When the number of new infections increased substantially in early 2020, Norway was under lockdown. This had major consequences on the health care system. In response, the Norwegian government and health authorities strongly encouraged the use of telemedicine and implemented measures to support its use. Since then, there has been a large increase in the number of live video consultations both in specialist and community health care.

Conclusions: When the necessary technical infrastructure is in place, the remaining barriers to telemedicine use, such as reimbursement and integration of health care systems, can easily be overcome, which would result in high adoption rates of telemedicine.

Conflicts of Interest: TS is a partner of the Norwegian teledermatology provider “Askin.”

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KEYWORDS

COVID-19; pandemic; teledermatology; telemedicine; general practitioner

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