

Abstract

Tele dermatology: Experience in Singapore

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Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the development and widespread adoption of tele dermatology both locally and globally. As dermatology is predominantly a visual specialty, tele dermatology is particularly useful for patient care and collaboration between health care professionals.

Objective: To share lessons learned from the local experience with tele dermatology in Singapore.

Methods: The main models of tele dermatology are asynchronous (store-and-forward), synchronous (real-time communication), and hybrid tele dermatology (mixed combination of both asynchronous and synchronous elements).

Results: During the pandemic, tele dermatology has enabled suitable patients to have continued access to clinical care in the comfort of their home, while at the same time supporting safe distancing measures to mitigate exposure to and spread of SARS-CoV-2. At the National Skin Centre in Singapore, asynchronous store-and-forward tele dermatology is used for telecollaboration with doctors and nurses from external health care institutions, nursing homes, and primary care clinics. A hybrid model comprising synchronous phone or video teleconsultation with the patient, together with review of recent clinical photographs submitted by the patient, is used for the remote care of selected patients with mild and/or stable dermatological conditions. There is a high diagnostic concordance of 87% between teleconsultation and in-person consultation. As not all patients are suitable for teleconsultation, preteleconsultation triage is helpful.

Conclusions: Moving forward, even as we approach a new postpandemic era, tele dermatology will continue to evolve and become an integral pillar of the health care landscape.

Conflicts of Interest: None declared.

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KEYWORDS

tele dermatology; teleconsultation; synchronous; asynchronous; store-and-forward; hybrid; Singapore

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