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## UTILITY OF TELEMEDICINE IN COVID-19 PANDEMIC:

### A NARRATIVE REVIEW

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#### Abstract

**Background:** The outbreak of coronavirus disease-19 (COVID-19) is a public health emergency of international concern. Telemedicine is an effective option to fight against the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and has allowed many patients with acute/chronic diseases to access remote care worldwide, proving to be the ideal solution to overcome restrictions and carry out non-urgent routine follow-ups on patients. Homoeopathy being a holistic system of medicine has been benefiting many people for their health problems. Telemedicine can help to increase the availability of homoeopathy to the level where health care is difficult to reach, in cases where there is no need for the patient to physically see for regular, routine check-ups or continuous monitoring. Homoeopathy telemedicine or teleconsultation will enhance primary health care immensely. In this review literature available from various published studies and data bases like PubMed, Springer, Google Scholar, Elsevier and Cochrane Library and references from the relevant articles published literature were searched in English language up to May 2021. The aim of this review was to identify the role of telehealth services in preventing, diagnosing, treating, and controlling diseases during COVID-19 outbreak. Therefore, telehealth should be an important tool in caring services while keeping patients and health providers safe during COVID-19 outbreak. In future extensive studies are required to further provides implication on the potentials of consolidating virtual care solutions towards contributing to integrate digital technologies into healthcare services like Homoeopathy.

**Keywords:** Homoeopathy, Telemedicine, Teleconsultation, Covid-19, Pandemic

## Introduction

Novel corona virus disease (COVID-19) has become a major health challenge worldwide. The current crisis has made telemedicine as a preferred approach of delivery of health care.<sup>1</sup> On 11 March, 2020 the emergency committee of the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that COVID-19 is caused by SARS CoV-2 virus infection, that would sooner or later affect all countries of the world as a global pandemic.<sup>2</sup>

Telemedicine refers to the use of telecommunication and information technologies to provide clinical health care to distant or isolated individuals. Using such technology, clinicians can examine patients and make treatment recommendations across long distances.<sup>3</sup> It is not possible to create an effective telemedicine program overnight, but the health systems that have already implemented can leverage it for the purpose of COVID-19.<sup>4</sup>

At a time when physical contact with the medical system possesses a risk of infection, telemedicine offers a vehicle for delivering medical care at a safe social distance. For families with limited resources, telemedicine offers particular advantages, obviating the need for transportation, child care, and additional time needed for in person office visits. For these reasons, telemedicine has been proposed as a solution to health care inequities in the past and implemented with success in select populations.<sup>5</sup>

In a study by Mehrotra et al., it was found that telemedicine can increase access and improve the quality of care in remote areas.<sup>6</sup> Another study concludes that telemedicine may turn out to be the cheapest, as well as the fastest, way to bridge the rural–urban health divide in developing countries like India.<sup>7</sup>

It was found in the study by Mishra V. that patient seeing more value in the use of telemedicine during COVID-19. They are more willing to experiment with telemedicine and are not intimidated by the technology related to telemedicine.<sup>8</sup>

Telemedicine which is the deployment of ICT to deliver healthcare digitally can be adopted to limit physical human interaction<sup>9</sup> and it has become a basic need for the general population, health care providers, and patients with COVID-19, especially when people are

in quarantine, enabling patients in real time through contact with health care provider for advice on their various health problems.<sup>10</sup>

The ability to provide care to patients at a distance greatly extends the geographic footprint of a health care system. Patients also enjoy benefits of telemedicine encounters as waiting time in the office is often reduced, time spent traveling to and from appointments is eliminated.<sup>11</sup> For patients caring for children or other persons, they can be evaluated from the comfort of their homes without endangering others by bringing them to the visits.<sup>11</sup>

It was concluded in the study by Rabuñal Ramón et al. that the telemedicine tool TELEA is useful for the management of high-risk patients with COVID-19.<sup>12</sup>

Hakim AA, Kellish AS, Atabek U et al (2020) in their study concluded implications for the use of telehealth in surgical patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>13</sup> Whereas another study done by Anthony Jnr. Bokolo suggest that telemedicine and virtual software are capable of decreasing emergency room visits, safeguarding healthcare resources, and lessening the spread of COVID-19 by remotely treating patients during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>14</sup>

Telemedicine specifically describes using technology to connect a patient to a provider. To enable patients to retain access to healthcare, many countries have revised regulations to allow health care providers to use telemedicine and receive appropriate reimbursement.<sup>15</sup>

Telemedicine has been considered an ideal tool to face this Covid 19 pandemic. Globally, for approximately a decade, telemedicine had been gradually implemented. However, restrictive administrative regulations and missing solid legal frameworks had been the compelling reasons behind the slow growth of this type of care.<sup>16</sup>

## **Conclusion**

India's digital health policy advocates use of digital tools for improving the outcome and efficiency of healthcare system and lays significant focus on the use of telemedicine services especially in the health and wellness centres at the grass root level wherein a mid-level health care provider/health worker can connect the patient to the doctor through technology platforms for providing safe, timely and best possible homoeopathic

treatment. Homoeopathic treatment has no side effects and holistically treats individuals. Homoeopathic medicine gives safe and gentle treatment in a cost-effective way. The practice of Telemedicine can prevent transmission of infectious diseases reducing the risk to both doctors and patients by avoiding social contact. Bringing this type of 'Modern Homeopathy' based on modern research and telemedicine will help to serve millions of patients suffering from various complex diseases in the country as well as abroad and will eliminate the need for hospitalisation in a large percentage of cases,

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### **Conflict of Interest**

None declared

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