

Telemedicine- need of the hour to improve manpower health & economic development of India Unlimited

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Introduction

Healthcare, in India, is provided as a three tier system as Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels. Complexities of infectious diseases, increasing population, and difficult to maintain resources appears to have adversely impacted health care sector thereby compromising the health of our vast manpower, at least qualitatively. To generate newer ideas for providing better healthcare by modifying the existing strategies or introducing newer concepts appears to be the need of the hour. In current scenario, introduction of Telemedicine as an addition to our multipronged health strategies provides an excellent option. By improving the health of our vast manpower, India will not only sustain but, also, further, improve the economic growth and development. To accomplish the same, generating awareness among health care workers and policy makers about introduction of Telemedicine as an additional prong is very much essential. Therefore, the present study is undertaken with the aims and objectives as.

Aims & Objectives

To assess and generate awareness among health care professionals about telemedicine in our country & to help health care workers and decision makers to understand the importance of Telemedicine in improving health care status, and also attempt to formulate some basic guidelines about Planning, Management & introduction of telemedicine as an additional strategy.

Materials and methods

To assess the degree of awareness among healthcare professionals about Telemedicine & their opinion about introduction of Telemedicine (TeleMed) as an additional approach, a questionnaire was designed and survey conducted with 120 healthcare professionals. These included 50 CMO, 50 nurses and 20 technical hands. The questionnaire was designed after extensive review of literature. It included questions like

1. Do you think that telemedicine is helpful in rural areas in the management of common medical problems (using advanced technologies)?

2. Do you think that development of Mobile Telemedicine is useful in disaster management (eg. Tele ambulance, Mobile Tele hospitals)?

3. Do you think that interactive video technology is more acceptable for second opinions or informal consents than for diagnosing new patients?

4. Do you think that tele medicine can improve the continuity of care for patients esp. for those who cannot move or whose movement is not desirable?

5. Do you think that telemedicine is useful for the following types of care?

(a) Emergency care

(b) Preventive services

(c) Chronic condition management (d) Post-surgical follow up

(e) Acute non-emergency care

(f) Home health care. Do you think that telemedicine can decrease the gap esp. in rural areas by increasing the exposure & networking?

6. Do you think that thorough physical examination is possible through televideo 2 way communication?

7. Do you think that telemedicine can improve the health status of our man power by India being the second highest populous country in the world with reasonable standards of education?

8. Do you think that telemedicine is not feasible in developing economy countries like India? The results of above questionnaire were analyzed to calculate the level of awareness & attitude of health care professionals about introduction of Telemedicine in the present time. Since survey conducted is in questions-answer form, responses judged are by simple arithmetic expressions. Moreover since the topic is having subjectivity also, final summary and conclusions are arrived at by giving more weightage to percent criteria.

Results

Of the total 120 HCW s surveyed- 42/50 CMO agreed that introduction of Telemedicine will be a boon while of 50 nurses 28 only & 5/20 technicians said so. 8/50 CMO were not clear about its role while only 15 technical hands had no idea about TeleMed.