

Impact of Covid-19 on cardiovascular clinics: are we ready for tele-medicine?

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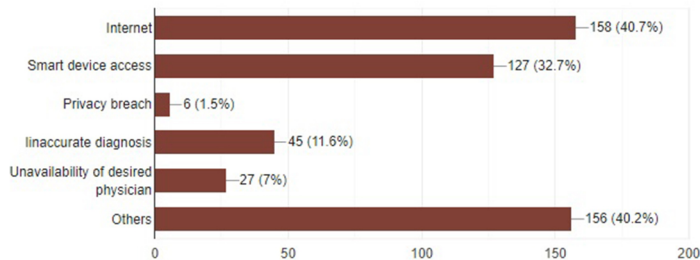
Background: World is facing Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic since December 2019. [1, 2]. COVID-19 has significantly decreased the influx of patients presenting with cardiovascular diseases at hospitals. The aim of this study was to determine the difficulties faced by patients in visiting the cardiac outpatient department during COVID-19 era and to assess the awareness regarding telemedicine and willingness to adopt if offered in future.

Methods: This cross sectional study was carried out on patients presenting to the outpatient department in a National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases. Data was collected after verbal consent from patients. The collected data was entered using IBM SPSS version 21, mean \pm SD was calculated for continuous variables and frequency and percentages were calculated for the categorical variables.

Results: A total of 404 patients were interviewed, 42% female and 58% male with 77.5% from urban areas and 22.5% from rural areas. A total of 32.1% patients presented with shortness of breath, 28.8% with chest pain and 19% with palpitations. Regarding cardiovascular diagnosis 69.5% had ischemic heart disease, 38.3% had hypertension, 29.3% suffered from heart failure and 10.3% had valvular heart disease. A total of 26.7% visited the emergency room during the pandemic, 81.9% were compliant with medication and only 66% were compliant with a healthy lifestyle. A total of 52.8% patients found it difficult to attend the out patients department due to limited appointments, 24% due to limited mobility due to lockdown, 18.2% due to financial issues, 14.2% due to fear of acquiring infection from the hospital. Regarding telemedicine, 11.2% of the patients were aware of it and only 4.5% had previously used it, with 41.3% patients willing to opt for telemedicine in future. Regarding barriers to usage of telemedicine, a total of 40.7% of patients had no access to internet, 32.7% did not have a smart device and 11.6% were afraid of being diagnosed incorrectly.

Conclusion: It was found that distancing measures, lockdowns and restricted mobility of the masses has made it difficult for patients to visit the clinics which has led to patients visiting the emergency room. Telemedicine awareness was found to be limited, however many patients were willing to adopt provided their limitations can be overcome.

Abstract Figure. Difficulty faced during OPD visit



Abstract Figure. Barriers to Tele-medicine

