

## Commentary: Conquering insurmountable challenges: The importance of tele-rehabilitation

The COVID-19 pandemic drove home the stark reality of social isolation across the world.<sup>[1]</sup> Human beings are a social species that rely on cooperation to survive and thrive. The sequestration of every human being into a closed space away from others during the course of the pandemic has physical and mental effects and people with visual impairment were at greatest risk with no exception. There were numerous challenges faced by Persons with Disabilities (PWD) during the pandemic that included challenges in care due to social distancing measures, poor access to welfare schemes due to the lockdown, improper nutrition, and fear of continuity of employment due to possible preference to a sighted individual to name a few.<sup>[2]</sup> The need to assist them during this challenging time was more important than ever. A meta-analysis on telerehabilitation for people with low vision revealed minimal literature on the modality and there is a need to focus on these services for improving vision-related quality of life.<sup>[3]</sup> The current study describes the experience of providing telerehabilitation services to 492 clients from a tertiary eye care center in North India during the peak of the pandemic last year. There were eight themes or categories that were catered to the beneficiaries such as COVID-19 disease related, lockdown related, health-related, livelihood related, education related, social related, certificates related, and empowerment related. The respondents indicated that television news (59.4%) was the most frequent medium of access of information and transmission by contact or touch (36.4%) was the most common mode of transmission of COVID-19.<sup>[4]</sup> There is an acute need to set up protocols and processes to cater to PWDs in the event of any major crisis such as the ongoing pandemic through the use of technology tools such as teleconsultations.<sup>[5]</sup> Multiple challenges would prevent them to access care from the vision rehabilitation centers thereby placing them at increased risk during times of widespread social isolation. Various initiatives such as counseling for mental well-being, financial support, information and resources, skilling programs for young adults, therapeutic interventions for children with multiple disabilities, access to digital libraries, and rehabilitation helpline are some of the most important aspects that can be catered through telerehabilitation. We must rise to the occasion, we must come together and we must extend our helping hand to our fellow beings at greater risk who are differently abled. There is no greater time such as this for us all to make a difference in their lives!

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