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### WE8.13 Hospital consultant remote consultations during COVID 19 - experiences at a large NHS trust

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**Aim:** COVID-19 has intensified the need for the NHS to almost overnight utilise remote consulting technology, with clinicians under increasing pressure to provide virtual services preferentially, in line with the NHS digital ideals. This study explores the clinician experience of virtual working during the pandemic in a large acute NHS Teaching Trust, and to identify the facilitators and barriers to remote consultations (RC).

**Method:** A multi-format online questionnaire was constructed and emailed to all 816 consultants across the trust. The survey was open for one month and during that time two reminders were sent. The data was tabulated and analysed using Microsoft excel.

**Results:** 270 consultants responded to the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 33%, with 208 (77%) performing RCs. 92.8% of these (N=193) have increased the number of RC during the pandemic. 45.9% did not have their own office (N=124), with over half of those (N=63) sharing an office with 3 or more people. The majority of remote consultations were over telephone (82%) with only 54.4% feeling they had the right equipment for video consultations. The biggest barriers were patient related issues (technical, poor environment or not available at scheduled time).

**Conclusion:** The main challenges facing consultants, in the provision of virtual services were: lack of appropriate hardware, an absence of a suitable environment, the prevalence of technical complications, and difficulties experienced by their patients. It is therefore,

important to recognise, both at an organisational level, and nationally, that virtual consultations may play a role in the worsening of health inequalities.