

Teledentistry, a Need of Time

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In 1997, Cook coined the term “teledentistry,” defining it as “the practise of employing video-conferencing technologies to diagnose and provide recommendations regarding treatment across a distance”. Teledentistry just like telemedicine was first use by National Aeronautics and Space Administration is an independent agency NASA in 1970 and then by United States Army. Patients who experience a dental emergency may find that teledentistry can be quite beneficial [1]. Covid-19 lockdown favors teledentistry’s swift adoption. When social distance is necessary, telehealth can act as an efficient platform for remote communication between dental healthcare practitioners and patients and can help to lower the risk of infection [2].

A relatively new specialty called “teledentistry” mixes dental care with communication technology. Most dentists and dental educators are not aware that teledentistry can be used for advanced dental education in addition to enhanced access to dental treatment [3].

Clinical outcomes show that teledentistry can provide affordable care to marginalised patient populations, like those in rural areas. Teledentistry offers a chance to enhance conventional teaching techniques in dental education and will open up new career prospects for dentists and dental students [3].

There are two forms of Teledentistry, Real-time consultation and Store and forward.

“Real-time consultation” involves a video conference. On the other hand, “store and forward” entails the exchange of clinical data and static images that have been gathered and stored in the telecommunications equipment [4].

Uses of teledentistry are diverse. It can be used in online education, Periodontics, Oral Pathology, Oral Medicine, Orthodontics, detection of Dental Caries, in Allied Health Sciences [4].

During current COVID-19 pandemic teledentistry is an effective way to triage high risk patients needing urgent or emergency care thus mitigating the risk of the spread of the coronavirus. On 30th January 2020, the WHO Director General declared that the outbreak constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) [5]. Tele dentistry is yet to become integral part of Pakistan dental health care service, but it is imperative that dental health care providers actively promote and support the use of teledentistry [6].

The future of teledentistry will depend on the efforts of the health authorities as on the collective efforts of the dental professionals [7]. It is recommended that continues learning activities should emphasize on the role of Teledentistry in Pakistan through workshop, e-seminars and conferences so that people will get more benefit.

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