



TELEDERMATOLOGY

# AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AWARENESS, ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE OF TELEDERMATOLOGY AMONG PHYSICIANS IN ABAKALIKI, SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIA

*N Okoh<sup>(1)</sup> - C Onyekonwu<sup>(2)</sup> - O Nwankwo<sup>(3)</sup> - H Urochukwu<sup>(4)</sup>*

*Federal Teaching Hospital, Internal Medicine, Abakaliki, Nigeria<sup>(1)</sup> - University Of Nigeria, Sub-department Dermatology, Internal Medicine, Ituku Ozalla, Enugu, Nigeria<sup>(2)</sup> - University Of Calabar, Community Medicine, Calabar, Cross Rivers State, Nigeria<sup>(3)</sup> - Ebonyi State University, Health Policy And Knowledge Translation, Abakaliki, Nigeria<sup>(4)</sup>*

**Background:** Many developing countries like Nigeria are facing a human resource for health crisis with attendant consequence of having 1 dermatologist:1 million Nigerians versus ideal of 1: 30,000-50,000 population. Teledermatology, as a form of telemedicine is an effective tool in enhancing health service delivery and bridge the gap in the provision of dermatology services far from a trained dermatologist. The explosion of ICT powered social media applications makes this modality an alternative form of health service delivery.

**Objectives:** To determine the awareness, attitude and practice of teledermatology among physicians in Abakaliki and to ascertain the level of preparedness of the physicians to the inclusion of teledermatology as a component of the health service delivery in Nigeria.

**Methods:** A cross sectional study design was used. Participants were selected by multistage sampling method. A self-administered questionnaire was used to obtain information from physicians practicing in Abakaliki, South Eastern Nigeria.

**Results:** There were 179 respondents drawn from the different levels of health care facility in Abakaliki, Ebonyi state. The mean level score of the awareness of dermatology/teledermatology and experience with the use of teledermatology was inadequate (2.97, 2.03 and 2.05 respectively). Less than 30% were familiar with the use of teledermatology, 56.7% were satisfied with their use of teledermatology; less than one-third considered teledermatology a high priority for Government health care services. The store and forward form of teledermatology was used in about two-thirds of cases and mainly for diagnosis or to obtain a second opinion in patient care.

**Conclusion:** Our study showed that the awareness of teledermatology among physicians in Abakaliki, South Eastern Nigeria was poor. Majority of the respondents were interested in the use of teledermatology in patient care, but did not consider it necessary to include





tele dermatology as part of health service delivery package.

