



TELEDERMATOLOGY

CLINICAL PROFILE AND PRACTICAL VIABILITY OF A TELEDERMATOLOGY PRACTICE IN SOUTHERN RURAL INDIA - AN OBSERVATIONAL STUDY

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Introduction: India has a ratio of one qualified dermatologist for every 200,000 people and this is worse in rural areas. Teledermatology potentially offers a viable platform to deliver diagnosis and treatment to the patients in distant rural areas by qualified specialists residing in cities.

Objective: To study the clinical profile, diagnostic certainty and practical viability of a pilot Teledermatology practice in rural southern India.

Material and Methods: A retrospective analysis of data from a Teledermatology centre at Kanakapura was done for a period of 15 months from the initiation of the practice. Hybrid teledermatology with teledermatoscopy was practised at this centre. Basic clinical profile of patients was recorded. The diagnostic certainty in providing a single working provisional diagnosis was assessed. Patient satisfaction was assessed by feedback calls made a week & a month subsequent to their first visit. Practical viability issues of infrastructure and feasibility were assessed.

Results: A total of 608 patients, aged between 3 months - 81 years, were seen by teleconsultation over a period of 15 months. The male to female ratio was 4:6. Eczematous disorders, acne-related conditions and infections/infestations were the most common conditions reported in 17.3%, 13.4 % and 13.3% of the patients respectively. The diagnostic certainty in providing a single working provisional diagnosis existed in 75.5% (470) of the cases, while a differential diagnosis of ≥ 2 probable conditions was suggested in the rest. Assessment via feedback phone calls revealed that, 82% of the patients were satisfied with the teleconsultation, found it economically more suitable & rated it equal to a traditional physical consultation.

Conclusion: Teledermatology offers an economically sustainable platform with high levels of acceptability & satisfaction in both patients & doctors. A well-structured hybrid teledermatology platform with teledermatoscopy has great potential in providing specialist





services in rural areas across the globe.

