



TELEDERMATOLOGY

TELEDERMATOLOGY MODEL IN REMOTE AND RURAL COMMUNITIES IN EGYPT

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Background: One of the major challenges in the health care system of Egypt is the centralization of specialized medical services in the country's major cities, leaving more isolated and rural communities with less than adequate medical services. As such, an initiative has been executed to install nodes for teledermatology in Nubia Region in the south of Egypt and El-Kharga Oasis in its Western desert. Both geographical regions are considered the most remote and cut-off regions in the nation,

Objectives: To improve health care services provided to citizens in remote areas, enhance medical technology solutions by establishing a remote diagnostic unit, and provide dermatologists in those remote governorates with on the job training to improve performance through a continuous medical education process.

Methods: Installation of a remote diagnostic unit was done at two ends: centrally in Kasr AlAiny Hospitals at Cairo University (a public non-profit hospital) and in outpatient clinics (provided by non-governmental organization (NGO) in Nubia Region as well as in El-Kharga Oasis. The hardware was limited to include a High Definition (HD) display screen, HD audio system, a laptop, and a cart. Training and technical support was provided to physicians and IT personnel.

Results: On average the number of examined patients was 6 per session. The total number per 12 consecutive months was 167 patients. Rate of patients attending the sessions decreased markedly during summer months, where excess temperatures rendered it uncomfortable for patients to seek medical advice.

Conclusions: The model's functionality depended highly on choosing the proper environment hosting it as well as on the willingness, and strong need of dermatologists and general practitioners to improve their capacities. Challenges such as weak strength of the internet connection would render quality of communication and hence diagnosis less accurate.

