



Teledentistry During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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INTRODUCTION

- Nations of the world faced an unexpected health crisis in 2020 due to the discovery of the COVID-19 virus.
- COVID-19 pandemic presented a global challenge to all aspects of life.
- World adopted the use of more technology in daily life activities.
- Health professionals had to follow WHO & CDC recommendations by transferring their practices to remote patient monitoring.
- Oral health professionals had to follow WHO & CDC recommendations by providing remote monitoring for their patients using Teledentistry.
- Teledentistry globally lags in the implementation of these services.

PURPOSE

Investigate literature related to the role of Teledentistry during a global pandemic and its associated benefits, effectiveness, and barriers on patient oral healthcare outcomes and to identify oral healthcare providers' knowledge, attitude, and perceptions on the utilization of teledentistry telecommunication tools during virtual patient care.

METHODOLOGY

- Extensive review of the literature was conducted utilizing electronic databases and websites of seminal journals and professional organizations and associations, in the English language.
- Specific databases used to conduct the literature reviews include
- EBSCO Host, PubMed, and CINAHL; accessed through Old Dominion University's Libraries and direct access to the American Dental and Dental Hygienist's Associations' websites. Inclusion criteria were limited to peer-reviewed journals.
- Keyword searches such as Telemedicine, Teledentistry, Telehealth, pandemic, COVID 19, oral health, as well as documents exclusive to professional organizations such as Access, RDH magazine, and the American Dental Hygienist's Association.
- Selected articles were no greater than ten years old.

DISCUSSION

- Telehealth and Teledentistry are multidimensional solutions to the challenges healthcare faced during a global pandemic to include:
 - Limited health access
 - Remote patient monitoring
 - Health/oral health promotion
- All implemented using telecommunication and videoconferencing tools during remote patient monitoring.
- Telemedicine is not a new concept, yet had minimal use prior to before COVID- 19.
- Implementation of telemedicine has expanded rapidly during the public health crisis and has shown to ensure better healthcare access, improved health outcomes and reduced cost.
- Teledentistry is an important oral health delivery method especially during a global pandemic, freeing people from oral-facial pain, discomfort, disfigurement, and even death.
- Many studies established a causal relationship with associated benefits, effectiveness, and barriers of Teledentistry during a global pandemic on patients' oral healthcare outcomes.
- Multiple studies established positive perceptions with oral healthcare providers' knowledge, attitude, and perceptions on the utilization of Teledentistry telecommunication tools during virtual patient care.

CONCLUSION

- Emerging evidence supporting the effectiveness and efficacy of Teledentistry in providing remote patient monitoring and consultation, and as a potential solution during a global pandemic.
- Oral health care providers presented a high knowledge level and perceptions on the utilization of teledentistry telecommunication tools.
- Favorable attitudes from oral health care providers to utilize Teledentistry during virtual patient care during a global pandemic.