

Trends in Telemedicine and E-health

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ISSN: 2689-2707



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Submission: 📅 May 25, 2021

Published: 📅 June 29, 2021

Volume 2 - Issue 5

How to cite this article: Asmita, Harpreet Kaur. Trends in Telemedicine and E-health. Trends Telemed E-Health 2(5). TTEH. 000550. 2021. DOI: [10.31031/TTEH.2021.02.000550](https://doi.org/10.31031/TTEH.2021.02.000550)

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Mini Review

Telemedicine is the delivery of the health care using different modalities of telecommunications. E-Health on the other hand is the use of internet for and related technologies for the delivery of all forms of electronic health services, information, education, products by both medical as well as non-medical professionals [1]. From telemedicine to E-health it's a long journey. Concept of telemedicine is not new. If we dig into the history people in Africa used to light fire around the villages as a warning to the nearby villages in case of a disease outbreak. In early 1990's radio was being used for the two-way communication between a doctor and patients in Antarctica. Video communication was used for the first time by Nebraska Psychiatric Institute in 1950s. Telemedicine came in existence with the vision of serving the rural and remote population with poor health care facilities and infrastructure. It is cost effective, convenient, time saving, easily accessible and reduces congestion at the hospitals. Telemedicine can be either real time interaction or store and forward [2]. Telemedicine has been helpful in providing care, making diagnosis, giving treatment, follow up and seeking second opinion. With the advancement's telemedicine is being used in many different medical fields now e.g., tele-dermatology, tele-radiology, tele-pathology, tele-psychiatry, remote ICU monitoring, ambulance monitoring, mobile telemedicine units and electronic health records [3]. Telemedicine has been a boon for the countries which are densely populated and have limited resources specially in the times of COVID pandemic lot of patients suffer by missing their routine care either due to facilities being converted into COVID care or due to the fear of contracting the disease on visiting the hospital. Many suffered depression due to the prolonged lockdowns and isolation. Telemedicine services were used to follow up such patients and providing care to non-COVID patients within the safe environment of their home and using their mobile. Counselling sessions were organized for those in isolation as well as health care workers. Not only treatment and patient care telemedicine and E-health facilities are being used to spread awareness about different health domain, providing information and for education purpose. Several webinars, e-conferences and interactive sessions between the specialist and the general physicians or between the expert and general population are being conducted to update the knowledge. Though there is lot of advancement in this field still there are some limitations. Patient confidentiality with the electronic health records, informed consent, doctor-patient relationship, malpractice and litigation remain some of the areas where a lot of work needs to be done [4,5]. Hopefully telehealth will continue to serve the patients in near future even after the pandemic is over. It is especially useful for follow-up to avoid unnecessary hospital visits and a measure of e-learning for medical fraternity.

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