



## Telemedicine for kidney transplant patients in covid pandemic : Breaking the access barrier

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### Abstract:

**Introduction:** Telemedicine is the delivery of health care and/or health information using electronic systems. During the current Covid pandemic there was restricted access of Kidney transplant patients to healthcare services because of concerns of COVID19 infection. There is no previous experience in Telemedicine for kidney transplant patients, **Aims:** This single centre prospective was done study to assess the feasibility, acceptability and effectiveness of Telenephrology services for regular followup of Kidney Transplant patients as well as for triaging patients for admission in setting of a countrywide lockdown. **Methods:** The study period was the lockdown period in the country from 23rd March to 30 June. The patients were informed about the availability of Telenephrology services through text messages sent from our patients data base as well through Social Media like Facebook and WhatsApp. The patient data was stored in Electronic Medical records (EMR) using the Healthplix platform. A combination of WhatsApp and EMR database was used to provide telemedicine services during the lockdown period. On receiving the request, a formatted message was sent requesting for information seeking current concerns by the patient, weight, vital signs including blood pressure records as well as current and previous investigations. The data was entered in EMR and electronic prescription generated. This was emailed or whatsapped as per patient preference. At the end of the econsult the patient was asked to rate his experience on a scale of 0 to 10. **Results:** During the study period a total of 296 consults on 122 patients were given. Of these, 233 consults were for domestic patients and 57 were for international patients. The domestic patients were from the states of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Gujarat Assam and Karnataka. The study group comprised of patients and there were 85 males and 37 females. Of these were 26 international patients and 96 were domestic patients. All these patients were provided teleconsultation using a combination of a whatsapp text and an audio call on smartphone. The mean age of the patients in was 43 years ( range 11 - 69 yrs ). Of



the 290 econsults that were offered, 295 opted in for teleconsultation. In only 1 econsult, the patient opted out and decided to come for opd visit as he was not comfortable with either whatsapp or email prescription. Of the kidney transplant, in the study, 4 were new patients transplanted during the COVID 19 pandemic. The rest 118 were follow-up patients, previously being followed up in our OPD clinics. Of the 296 that were given econsults, 277 were advised follow-up econsults and 9 were advised admission. These included 6 patients who were suspected and found to be covid positive based on teleconsultation and were triaged to covid positive unit. There were 3 others who were admitted in COVID negative area. Of the 9 admissions, 8 were discharged and 1 patient died of COVID pneumonia. The patient satisfaction score for econsults was 9.5 **Conclusions:** So based on this pilot study, we conclude that Telenephrology offered a viable modality for delivery services during lockdown period when access to healthcare was restricted for transplant patients because of concerns regarding COVID infection risk as well logistical reasons. It also provides a model which can be replicated by Transplant physicians as well as organizations in the future to expand and improve the practice of Telenephrology.

### Biography:

Sanjeev Gulati is working at Fortis and Escorts gp of Hospitals, India.

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