

TELECONSULTATION BY A NURSE AS A PRELIMINARY APPROACH TO HOME VISITS IN OLDER PATIENTS AFFECTED WITH DEMENTIA

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Background

Telehealth uses video calling and other technologies to support patients and their caregivers at home. Teleconsultation by a nurse provides advantages for collecting information about older people's health. The present study was aimed to assess the benefits of teleconsultation by a nurse in older home patients affected with dementia.

Patients and Methods

In the time range between January 1st 2021 and December 31th 2022, 1702 requests for geriatric home multidimensional assessments were addressed to the Center for Cognitive Disorders and Dementia, Catanzaro Lido, ASP Catanzaro, Italy. Teleconsultation by a nurse was used as preliminary approach to patients affected with dementia when the request for having a home consultation by a geriatrician was not performed yet, due to the great overload even in time of pandemics, or for the difficulties of reaching people living in rural and mountain areas. The call was made to patient's caregiver who gave an informal and verbal consent to the interview. Tests administered included functional abilities in the activities of daily living (ADL and IADL); main disease and comorbidities, drugs taken by every patient were collected too. A simple questionnaire investigated the extent patient's caregiver appreciated this way of preliminary contact, according to the following scale: 0 = no appreciation; 1 = poor; 2 = sufficient; 3 = moderate; 4 = good; 5 = very good appreciation.

Results

260 older patients, 138 women and 122 men, mean age 81.3 ± 4.8 years old were teleconsulted; mean ADL was 2.97 ± 0.72 ; IADL 0.91 ± 1.2 . People were affected with Alzheimer's dementia in 41% out of the cases, vascular dementia 32%, mixed dementia 20%, other types of dementia 7%. Teleconsultation was overall appreciated, mean score 4.16 ± 0.19 .

Discussion and conclusions

Teleconsultation performed by a nurse is a fast and valuable opportunity for helping doctors in a preliminary assessment of older patients suffering from dementia. The opportunity of being monitored remotely may be particularly helpful for older adults with limited mobility and those living in rural areas. This modality of approach represents a new frontier in care and assistance to old frail people with dementia.