

Telemedicine: the experience of liver diseases clinic S.S. Filippo and Nicola hospital, Avezzano

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Background and objectives

The pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which began in 2019, has boosted the already tumultuous development of advanced information technologies applied in the workplace and social field.

The strong progress of healthcare projects linked to Telemedicine takes place in this context. Today, Italian and European institutions developed several strategic programs, supported by the PNRR funding that will allow, in the near future, to concretize the digitalization of healthcare.

In view of the objective benefits in the use of technologies for "eHealth", and in order to provide better care and prevention to patients suffering from chronic liver diseases, we have decided to start a telemedicine project.

The project was developed thanks to the collaboration between the U.O.S.D. of "Liver Diseases", Avezzano hospital and ALTEMS (High School of Economics and Management of Health Systems, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart).

Results and Materials and methods

The prospective observational study will last two years. In the first three months, 46 patients (54% males and 46% females) with chronic liver disease were enrolled, in an age range between 30 and 80 years old.

A basic requirement is the execution of the first visit in presence, in order to establish an effective doctor-patient relationship and acquire compliance with the telemedicine system. Of the 50 patients who were offered the possibility of televisit, 4 refused, 46 agreed to participate, and of the latter 6 expressed the will to return to the presence mode after the first remote visit.

Thirty of the 40 patients enrolled use the caregiver's home help, which in our experience plays a decisive role in the patients' compliance. The 40 patients enrolled have showed to have a good understanding of the methods of the televisit, expressing satisfaction in this regard as well.

Stratifying by age, it is evident that the loyal patients are under the age of 60 years old (70%), although in the over-60 age bracket there is a good participation as well, thanks to the caregivers' intervention. 75% of loyal patients come from Lazio Region.

Patients will be recruited until the expiry of the 24 months period, while continuing the follow-up of patients already enrolled.

Conclusion

Although it is still ongoing, up until now a good "compliance" has been found in the enrolled patients, even if, as expected, the participation in our study takes place mainly among patients under 60 years old.

In addition, for patients coming from the Lazio Region (75%) televisit allows a net gain in terms of expenses inherent in moving by car, contributing in turn to reduce environmental pollution.

Finally, the implementation of remote management of the patient with chronic liver diseases, will allow a better interaction and integration between local medicine and hospital medicine, and a more adequate assessment and management of the hepatopatic patient.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare no competing interests.

