Abstract

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Telemedicine in Rheumatology: From Pandemic to Innovative Care Instrument

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Background and aims: The COVID Pandemic has resulted in a significant restriction of movement between people. These measures have compromised chronic diseases patients' care pathways. Telemedicine can represent an option to the traditional visit. We evaluated the applicability of this new clinical tool for the rheumatic patient, investigating the propensity to use this innovative consultation method.

Materials and methods: We carried out a telephone survey and asked patients if they were interested in using telemedicine vs. the classic method visit. We also collected demographic and occupational data of the patients interviewed.

Result: 100 patients answered to the survey (M/F = 25/75); the average age was 58.5 years. 65% of the interviewees had a device that allowed them to make video calls and 75% said they were in favor of making a visit with this technological support. Telemedicine was considered a valid modality of visit for the 78% of patients and 55% would have preferred the classic visit. The level of education was the most relevant predictor for the acceptance of this innovative method.

Discussion: Telemedicine seems a valid clinical tool that can be used for the follow-up of rheumatic patients so that it can be useful in reducing waiting lists and both direct and indirect costs in the national health system.