

Awareness and Attitude of Primary Healthcare Patients towards Telehealth in Cairo, Egypt

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Abstract

Background: Telehealth is delivering health care services remote from healthcare facilities using telecommunications and virtual technology. Egypt is aiming to reach Universal Health Coverage; this increases the demand of telehealth in routine health services. Telehealth benefits are increasing access to expertise in difficultly reached geographical areas with no available medical teams and may be used as fast first aid. It could also minimize costs of hospitals, as patients can be monitored remotely even from home. As for barriers, especially in developing countries, are the unavailable infrastructure and the resistance of patients. Objective: To measure the awareness of telehealth among attendees of primary health care units and their acceptance of application of telehealth. Methodology: This was a cross sectional study among attendees of primary health units. A sample size was calculated to be 162. A valid Arabic interview questionnaire was designed, and 170 questionnaires were filled by attendees. Ethical issues were considered. Results: Awareness percentage of telehealth among attendees was 64.7% while willingness to implement telehealth was 78%. Both awareness and willingness were significantly associated with age groups, residence, socioeconomic status and presence of computer with net access. Conclusion: It is concluded that a large percentage of attendees to primary health care centers are aware of telehealth and are willing to implement it. The major cause of refusal to implement telehealth was due ignorance of using telecommunication devices and the desire to be in close contact with the physicians.

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