LETTER TO EDITOR

Closing the Gap: Addressing Challenges in Telemedicine Acceptance and User Experience

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Sir,

Through this 'Letter to Editor' I wish to express my thoughts on the research paper entitled "Telemedicine Acceptance and User Experience: A Gap to Be Addressed? (DOI: 10.55489/njcm.13052022143). Despite tremendous progress, the situation of telemedicine application adoption and its user experience highlights a noteworthy void in the healthcare system, especially in developing countries like India, and need immediate attention. Even during the COVID-19 epidemic, the general public was less drawn and showed little interest to adopt and use this technology, despite the fact that this technology has the capacity to benefit chronically ill individuals without exposing them to the virus. A cross-sectional study was conducted on 162 IT professionals employed in Tamil Nadu's Chengalpattu area to ascertain the telemedicine's acceptability, use, and level of satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 35% (56 participants) expressed willingness to embrace telemedicine for medical consultations indicating a noteworthy portion of the population is open to the idea, but falls short of its widespread acceptance. 48.1% (78 participants) thought the application was user-friendly while only scant participants i.e. 21% (34 participants) expressed contentment with their telemedicine encounters.[1] These findings underscore a significant gap between the potential benefits of telemedicine and the actual level of contentment among users.

Undoubtedly, telemedicine usage has changed the healthcare industry by providing never-before-seen levels of accessibility and ease for medical treatment.[2,3] However, a lack of knowledge regarding the extent and advantages of telemedicine exists in developing nations like India due to a number of causes including restricted access to information, communication technology, and financial difficulties. The adoption of this technology is hindered by inadequate internet access in remote mountainous regions of India and a lack of technology awareness in such places results in patients to depend on their kids to operate consultation devices.[4,5] Preference for in-person consultations may also lead to the reluctance to utilize the application or induce a sense of dissatisfaction. Further, security vulnerabilities might influence the overall degree of satisfaction and acceptability of telemedicine services as there is no way to determine the security offered by the application developers.[6]

Addressing the challenges in telemedicine acceptance and user experience is crucial for unlocking the full potential of this transformative healthcare modality. It is essential to evaluate the barriers preventing the wider implementation of telemedicine

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usage and find solutions to successfully traverse the changing environment of healthcare delivery. Public awareness campaigns, educational efforts, advertising, recommendations through reliable doctors might help to instigate a wave of tolerance towards telemedicine acceptance and usage. Also, streamlining user interfaces, ensuring robust cybersecurity safeguards, and actively seeking user input for further development are critical to enhance the telemedicine experience and bridge the gap between promise and practice. Strict adherence to data privacy and security is essential as it may affect patients', caregivers', and healthcare practitioners' decisions to use telemedicine services. Collaboration between policymakers, IT businesses-person, and stakeholders in the healthcare industry will also encourage extensive telemedicine adoption among the masses.[7] We can all work together to fully realize the potential of telemedicine in improving its accessibility and healthcare outcomes by encouraging candid discussions about healthcare advances. Through these concerted efforts we can ensure telemedicine becomes not only a viable option but a preferred choice for patients and providers alike, ultimately leading to a more inclusive, efficient, and effective healthcare systems that encourages closure of current gaps.

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