

Telehealth in HIV Care: Patient Experiences and Preferences in Princess Margaret Hospital Infectious Disease Special Medical Clinic

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Introduction:

Telehealth delivers care via audio-visual devices. It overcomes geographical barrier and brings convenience to both healthcare professionals and service users. It is set to become a critical component of the health system in the future. However, its adoption depends on patient acceptance. This study explores patient perspectives and preferences toward telehealth at Princess Margaret Hospital Infectious Disease Special Medical (IDSM) Clinic, identifying both its benefits and barriers to wider implementation.

Method:

A questionnaire-based survey was administered from December 2023 to April 2024. Two cohorts were assessed. The first cohort is that 22 patients already using telemedicine and completed the questionnaire. The second cohort is that 476 patients were selected for the study randomly. A mixed-method approach was applied in the design of this questionnaire, comprising both Likert-type scales and open-ended questions, captured data on satisfaction, preferences, and perceived obstacles to telehealth use.

Results:

Among the 22 telehealth users, satisfaction was notably high, with an overall mean score of 4.8/5. In contrast, within the larger group of 476 selected patients for telemedicine study, 401 expressed hesitations toward adopting telehealth. Of these, 184 patients indicated a strong preference for direct interaction with clinic staff, while 198 felt that their situation might not be ideally managed via telehealth.

Conclusion:

Patients who have experienced telemedicine report excellent satisfaction, highlighting its potential in HIV care. However, a significant portion of eligible patients remain reluctant to try telehealth, primarily due to a desire for in-person interactions and concerns about the suitability of their clinical condition for remote care. In summary, while telehealth is well-received by current users, addressing these reservations through enhanced patient education and tailored service delivery will be critical to increasing its acceptance among all suitable patients.