

Rheumatology Virtual Clinic during COVID 19 pandemic.

Are our patients satisfied?

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Introduction

Telemedicine can be broadly defined as the use of telecommunication technologies to provide medical information and services. It can be audio, visual, or text. Its use has increased dramatically during the COVID 19 pandemic to ensure patient and healthcare worker safety (1,2). Any healthcare professional can engage with it. It carries benefits like reduced stress and expense of traveling, maintenance of social distancing, and reduced risk of infection. There are some potential drawbacks such as lack of physical examination, liability and technological issues (3). Health and Safety Executive in Ireland have published full documents on a virtual clinics during COVID 19. Physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and all other health or social care professionals can use it (4).

Methodology

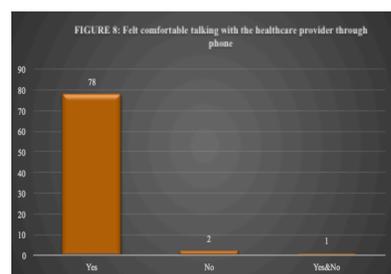
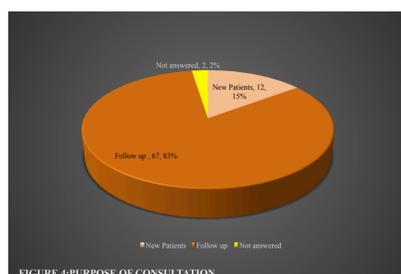
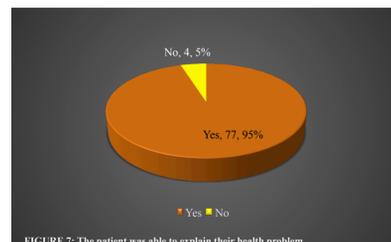
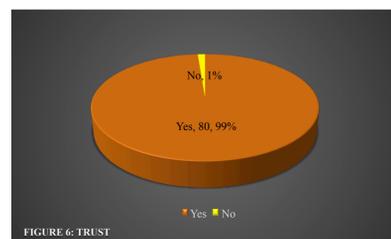
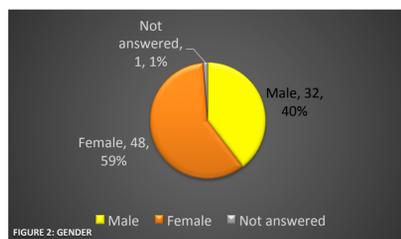
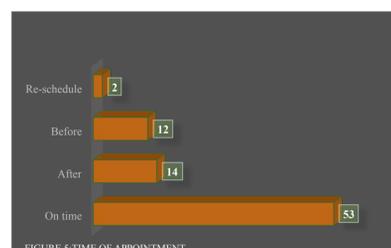
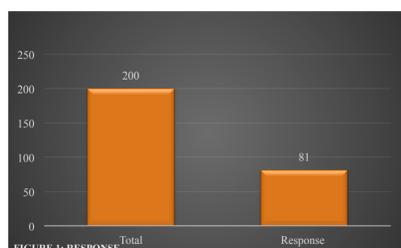
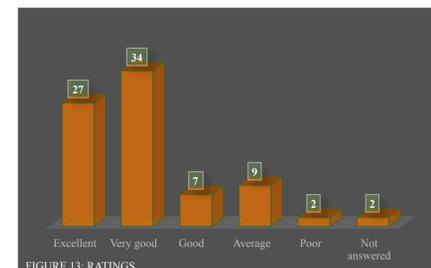
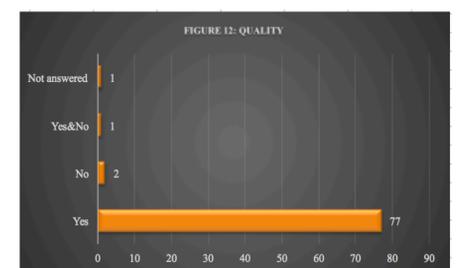
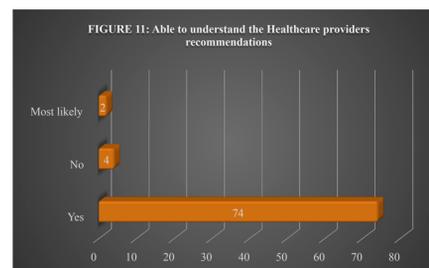
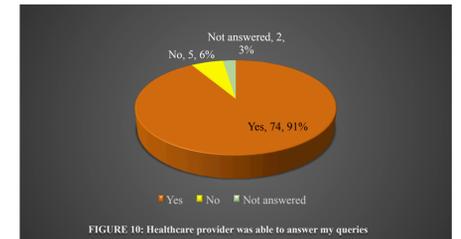
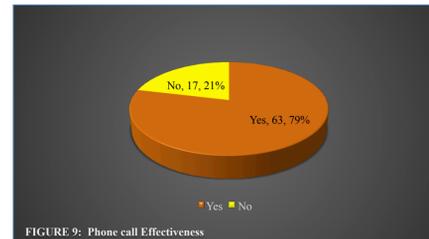
A questionnaire was sent to 200 patients were randomly selected by computer generated number from different virtual clinics (new and review, doctor and ANP led) run between March to May 2020 in the rheumatology department of University Hospital Waterford. We formulated 14 questions to cover the following aspects: demography, the purpose of the consult, punctuality, feedback, medico-legal concerns, and free text for comments. A self-addressed return envelope was included.

Discussion & Results

83 responses were received. 2 were excluded. The ratio of females to male respondents was 59:41, with the majority over 60 years old. The main appointment type was review 67 (83%). 80% of patients were called either before or time of their scheduled appointment. 98.8% of our patients had confidence in our data protection and trusted our system to maintain their confidentiality. 95% stated that they felt comfortable, were given enough time to explain their health problem and felt free from stress. The respondents who preferred attending the clinic in person (17 in total) compared to the virtual were mostly follow up patients- 12 vs. 5 new.

Conclusion

Patient satisfaction among those surveyed was high, despite having to introduce the service abruptly during the COVID 19 pandemic. There are many improvements we can adopt to improve our service and even maintain after the pandemic as a way of communicating with our stable patients. As we are covering a large geographical catchment, we can continue to implement the virtual clinic for some appointments. We should prioritize our efforts on identifying the right patient and the type of service we can offer, further training of staff, and increasing awareness of the patients as to how to get the most out of a virtual appointment.



PATIENT SATISFACTION WITH THE VIRTUAL CLINIC

- What is your gender
 - Male
 - Female
- What is your age group
 - 20-30 years
 - 30-40 years
 - 40-50 years
 - 50-60 years
 - >60 years
- Are you a
 - New patient
 - Follow up patient
- How long did you wait to receive the phone call:
 - Before my actual appointment
 - On time
 - After my appointment
 - They didn't call
 - They called to reschedule Reason.....
- I trust that my personal information and privacy will be protected after appointment
 - Yes
 - No
- During the call it was easy for me to explain my health problem to my doctor/nurse
 - Yes
 - No
- I felt comfortable talking to my doctor/nurse on the phone
 - Yes
 - No
- Talking to my doctor/nurse on the phone was as effective as in person
 - Yes
 - No
- My doctor/nurse was able to answer my questions on the phone
 - Yes
 - No
- I clearly understand the recommendations of my doctor/nurse
 - Yes
 - No
- The quality of the sound were adequate to talk to my doctor/nurse
 - Yes
 - No
- How would you rate the overall care you received from your provider at the phone clinic
 - Poor
 - Good
 - Average
 - Very good
 - Excellent
- What did you like best about the Telephone Consultation?
- What did you like least about the Telephone Consultation?

References

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