

Tele-dentistry a viable option for replacing in-person initial consultations, new study finds

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A study led by a team of periodontists and psychologists at King's College London including dentistry consultants at Guy's Hospital has found that tele-dentistry may be a valid option for first stage triage or

follow-up consultations, saving patients attending clinics in person.

With the significant impact of COVID-19 on dentistry, including the substantial rise in the use of video consultations, the team set out to investigate dentists' and patients' attitudes towards dental video consultations (tele-dentistry) and to identify potential ways to improve the experience.

Through a survey of 249 participants over a period of six months from 1 July to 14 December 2020, participants' attitudes were assessed using a series of questionnaires. The results showed that the majority of patients strongly agreed and were satisfied with the use of tele-dentistry, and dentists and dental students alike felt more confident and competent after having carried out a video consultation.

The use of tele-dentistry has many advantages for patients. Lead author of the study, Professor Luigi Nibali of King's College London explains that "as people tend to be working from home, and traveling into cities less, online appointments are a solution to a busy work schedule, and to help maintain social distancing in hospitals. Patients are also able to access healthcare earlier, receive specialist care, minimize time off work and reduce travel over long distances to receive consultations. This of course can only be applied to certain cases"

Clinicians and dentists can also significantly benefit from the move to tele-dentistry.

Co-author Dr. Payvand Menhadji added that "for clinicians, tele-dentistry has the potential to triage referrals and reduce long waiting lists. It has proven to be more cost-effective than real-time in person clinical consultations in dentistry. By giving patients reassurance, oral hygiene instructions and a follow-up video consultation to review the issue, it is possible to reduce the number of appointments requiring face-

to-face contact."

The team conclude that tele-dentistry can be a suitable alternative to increase access to healthcare services to patients and save resources during the pandemic and beyond. Healthcare providers should consider adapting patient pathways and utilizing tele-dentistry medicine as an alternative method of consultation.

The paper Patients' and dentists perceptions of Tele-Dentistry at the time of COVID-19, A questionnaire based study was published in the *Journal of Dentistry*.

More information: Payvand Menhadji et al, Patients' and dentists' perceptions of Tele-Dentistry at the time of COVID-19. A questionnaire-based study., *Journal of Dentistry* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jdent.2021.103782](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdent.2021.103782)

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