

A Retrospective Pilot Study on the Prevalence of Acceptability for Teleconsultation Among Spinal Cord Injury Patients

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Background and aim: Since January 2021, spinal cord injury (SCI) patients in Klinik Pakar Spinal (KPS), Hospital Rehabilitasi Cheras (HRC) were offered to follow up via teleconsultation, either virtual clinic (VC) or telephone consultation (TC). It was started because of increasing COVID-19 cases in Klang Valley, which resulted in the Malaysian government's endorsement of Movement Control Orders (MCO). Our study aims to observe the acceptability of teleconsultation among SCI patients in HRC and to describe their clinical and demographic features. **Methods:** A retrospective pilot study was conducted by identifying names of SCI patients scheduled for physical review from 1st January to 31st May 2021 from the KPS registry. Medical records of the patients who opted for teleconsultation were traced. Variables such as age, gender, race, neurological status, and locality were collected. **Results:** Teleconsultation was offered to 548 patients scheduled for physical review from 1st January to 31st May 2021. The prevalence of acceptability for teleconsultation among SCI patients was 100 (18.24%) patients, 55 (55%) patients opted for VC, and 45 (45%) patients opted for TC. From the 100 patients, majority are male (n = 68, 68%) and the rest are female (n = 32, 32%). The patients are predominantly Malay (n = 67, 67%), 22 (22%) Chinese patients and 11 (11%) Indian patients. The majority are from the age group of 25 – 50 years old (n = 51, 51%) and 72 (72%) patients stay in Klang Valley.

Conclusions: Prevalence of acceptability for teleconsultation among SCI patients in KPS, HRC was 18.42%, which is lower than a similar study done in Washington that had a prevalence of 27.2%. Though it is still in an

early stage, acceptance for teleconsultation is encouraging. Further study needs to be done to explore other factors that determine patient acceptability towards teleconsultation and telemedicine.