

Outreaching patients via Telepharmacy & Home Healthcare Pharmacy Service During Covid-19 Pandemic

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Background: After Wuhan, China outbreak, at end of December 2019, Corona virus (2019-nCoV) Spread to 209 countries including Pakistan and was declared as sixth public health emergency on January 30, 2020 by WHO. One million plus people have been affected worldwide. In Pakistan, Ministry of Health, government of Pakistan has confirmed the first case of COVID-19 on February 26, 2020 in Karachi. To abate the risk of corona virus social distancing was considered as the major preventive tool, therefore, Telepharmacy a subdivision of telemedicine, emerged as a rigorous tool for providing necessary health care services during this pandemic time. Telemedicine is Pharmaceutical service provision via telecommunications to patients. Tele-pharmacy is a unique and innovative way to deliver quality pharmacy services such as appropriateness review, patients counseling, prescription verification, cold chain maintenance, by a qualified pharmacist at remote areas.

Objective: The objective of this study was to access patients served by home healthcare (HHC) e-Pharmacy services to patients in Pakistan by Shifa International Hospital (SIH).

Methodology: A descriptive quantitative analysis on number of patients who were served via home healthcare Pharmacy services of Shifa international hospital, Islamabad, Pakistan. All the data of e-Pharmacy was entered in the software database Oracle of SIH which was gathered and analyzed using Excel-2016. Volume of patients served and types of service rendered were analyzed. Total patients served by SIH HHC e-Pharmacy services served between April-to July-2020.

Results: SIH HHC (home health care) e-Pharmacy services served approximately 2000 patients from April-to July-2020. All data were directly entered into the HMIS Oracle (hospital management information system) and stored in an online database, which was analyzed using Excel-2016

In April-2020 number of patients was 68 only which increased to 208 in May 2020, In June-2020 it was raised to 509 and in July-2020 up to 923.

The patient volume exponentially grew at the rate of 144% across the months.

Limitations and Implications: Covid-19 catalyzed the interest of people towards telemedicine removing the distance barrier in health. It opens new ways for hospitals and community pharmacies for formulating practice models and standards and can also enable provision of pharmacist based services for the patients residing at remote areas and rural areas. This study also has substantial limitations, including the data from single centre and small study duration.

Conclusion: Telemedicine services trend increased swiftly over passage of time, indicating the patient confidence in this service. SIH aimed to provide virtual care during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic using technology in effective manner and providing the patient care via delivery of essential medicines.