

## **Patient Satisfaction on Tele-consultation for the Management of Acute Oro-dental Problems: Findings from a Preliminary Study on Tele-dentistry in Sri Lanka**

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Telemedicine is defined as ‘the provision of real-time and offline medical care such as diagnosis, treatment planning, consulting and follow up via electronic transmission when the distance separates the participants. At the inception of the concept of telemedicine, it had been widely used in psychiatry, dermatology and paediatrics. Tele-dentistry was not a widely used tele-health service worldwide in the pre-Covid era. The scientific evidence related to the applications of tele-dentistry in Sri Lanka are scarce. The aim of this study was to assess patient satisfaction on tele-consultation for the management of acute oro-dental problems among a group of patients who have received tele-consultation via a private tele-consultation platform. A descriptive cross-sectional survey was carried out using an online questionnaire following tele-consultation with a single dental surgeon on a private tele-consultation application. It was conducted over a period of 12 weeks and questionnaires were sent to a convenient sample of 93 patients. The 11 items of the questionnaire assessing several aspects of patient satisfaction were developed based on a modified version of the ‘‘University of Washington telemedicine patient satisfaction Survey’’. The responses were recorded in 5-point likert scale. The data were obtained from 55 patients and majority (54%) of patients were males. Out of the 55 patients, 38 had obtained an educational qualification of undergraduate degree or above. Nearly twenty two percent declared that this was their first experience in tele-consultation. Sixty five percent of the participants revealed that they were ‘‘very satisfied’’ to meet a dentist through tele-consultation and 53 out of the 55 participants declared that they would like to seek dental care through such tele-consultation again. Despite their satisfaction to use such tele-health services, a majority reported that connectivity was a barrier to continue such services. However as the findings are based on a preliminary study, it is recommended to conduct a survey with a larger sample.

**Keywords:** Tele-dentistry, Telemedicine, Patient satisfaction, Sri Lanka

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