



Patients' use of telemedicine mobile application during COVID-19 restrictions: A qualitative study

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Agenda





Introduction

- Telemedicine as an alternative to face-to-face traditional healthcare
- COVID-19 pandemic effects and the social distancing restrictions.
- Telemedicine applications experience for patients.
- The healthcare sector and its settings were greatly disrupted by the unpredicted outbreak of the corona virus disease (COVID-19).
- Telemedicine has been widely considered to be safe and effective for delivering patient care during that challenging time period.



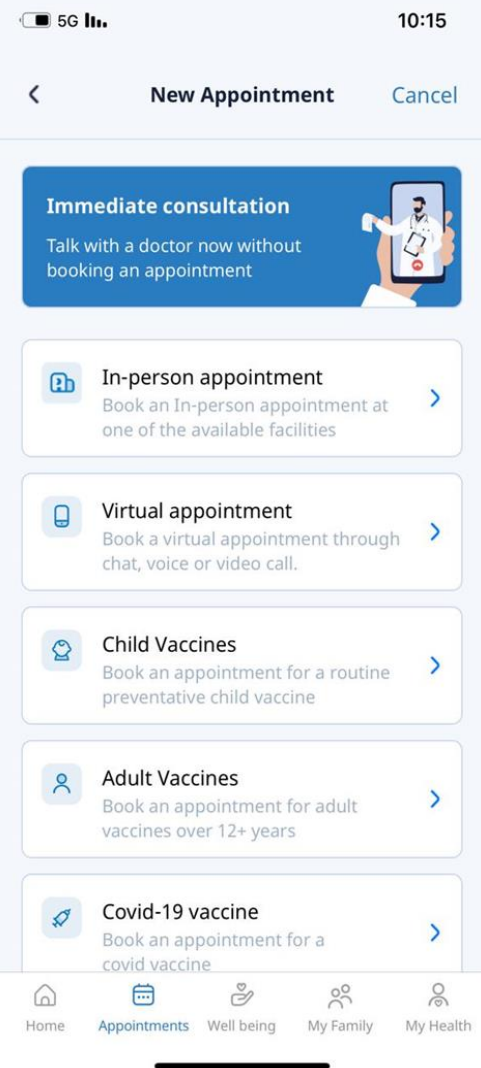
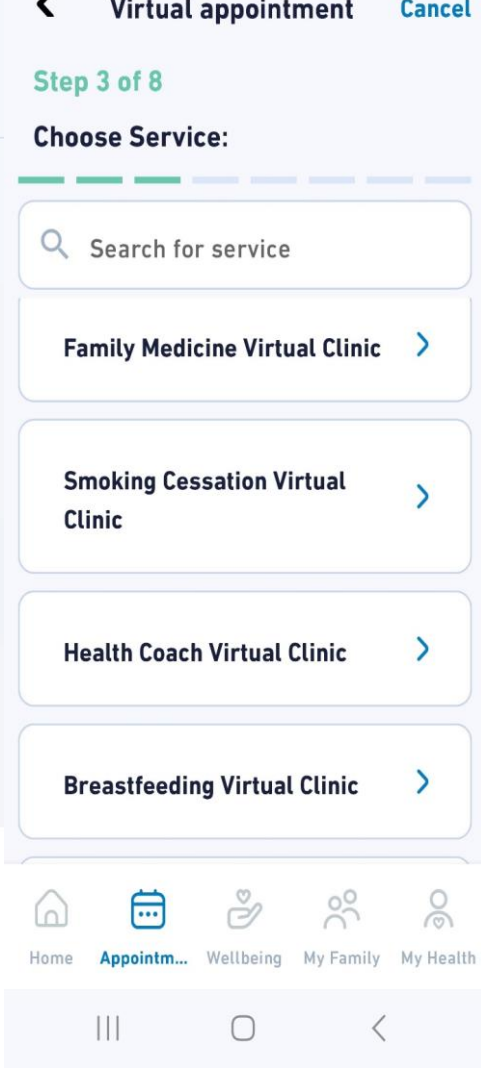
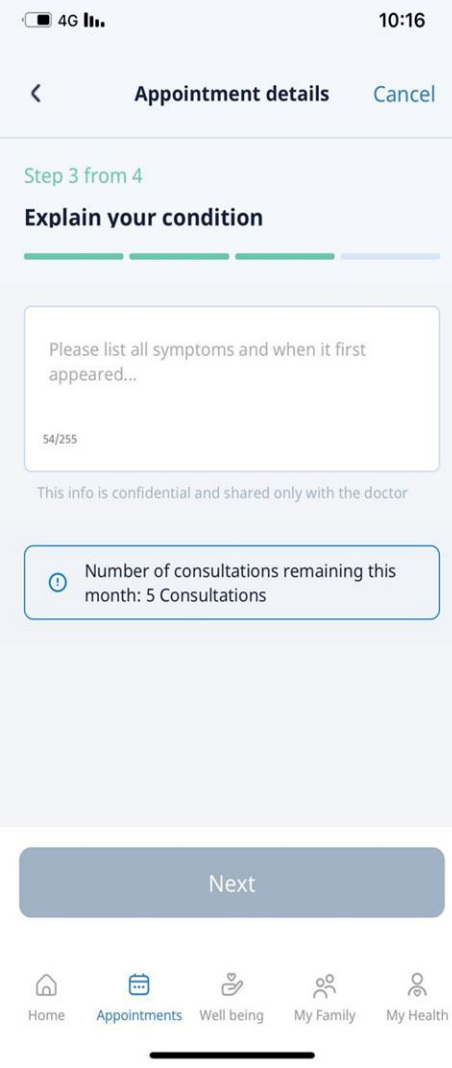
literature review

- Implementation and usage of telemedicine has faced several challenges:
 - Financial constraints
 - Operational challenges
 - Perceptions and attitudes of users
 - Regulatory requirements



Research settings

- The Ministry of Health (MOH) of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)
- Health consultation mobile application
- Provides free consultation to its consumers
- Consultation format: chat, audio, or video





Dr. MOHAMMED
09:44



have you used any medication in the last two days?

10:30 AM

No

10:30 AM



Type your message here



Q W E R T Y U I O P

A S D F G H J K L

↑ Z X C V B N M

123



space

return



Waiting for the doctor to join

Please wait the doctor is helping another person, they will join your session soon.



Notify me when doctor join



Appointment Details

Cancel

Step 3 from 4

Your Medical History

Do you suffer from any chronic diseases?



I Suffer



I don't Suffer

Do you suffer from any allergies?



I Suffer



I don't Suffer



I have read and accepted the [reservation approval form](#)

Request Immediate Consultaion



Home



Appointments



Well being



My Family



My Health



Data collection and analysis method

- Semi-structured interviews
- Patients were recruited from social media networks
- 6 Patients did participate by giving an interview for about 30 minutes by Zoom
- Ethics approval was obtained from the MOH in KSA and UOW
- Thematic analysis technique



Results

- Four females and two males
- Ages ranged between 22 to 43 years old
- Four of the patients used the app for them and their dependents.
- Four major themes emerged:
 - ☐ Reasons for using telemedicine.
 - ☐ Benefits of using telemedicine.
 - ☐ Drawbacks of using telemedicine.
 - ☐ Suggestions for improvement.



Theme 1. Reasons for using telemedicine

- experiences with using telemedicine
- Two sub-themes emerged
 - Usage caused by COVID-19

"The reason to use the service is to get a doctor opinion about my condition and whether I should go to hospital or receive care at home at the time of COVID-19 outbreak. "(Patient 5)

- Get medical opinions or assessment remotely

"I used it because I'm a bit far from the clinic. And my consultation didn't require physical presence. "(Patient 1)



Theme 2. Benefits of using telemedicine

- Ease of use and accessibility:

"Easy to access medical consultation from a reliable and trusted provider. I like it especially for my kids when they get sick." (Patient 5)

- Consultation at home:

"I think if someone use it once, they will definitely use it again. Especially for the cases that doesn't require physical attendance to the doctor's office." (Patient 2)

- Secure Storage of data
- Reliable provider



Theme 3: Drawbacks of using the telemedicine application

- Lack of information about the consulting physician
- Doctors do not always pay full attention to the patient.

"Sometimes I feel that some doctors do not listen in details about the symptoms, they don't take the time to fully understand the condition." (Patient 5)

- Technical flaws and issues
- The absence of physical touch effect on diagnosis

"When you're physically at the doctor's office they have a better chance of diagnosing correctly." (Patient 2)



Theme 4: Suggestions for the improvement

- Marketing:

"Promotional videos to show how easy it is to get a consultation. I think this would help many." (Patient 5)

- Integration with other apps:

"They could also add integration with hospitals so when you need to go to hospital, they would book an appointment for you. Or if you needed a scan or pathology, it would be directly through them. So, patient would have a follow up until their condition is resolved. It is all within Ministry of Health so it should be integrated." (Patient 6)

- More specialists.
- 24/7 availability
- Rating feature



Conclusion:

- Telemedicine has been a vital part of the response to the spread of COVID-19 worldwide.
- Patients have reported several benefits to using telemedicine application during COVID-19 restrictions.
- Patients were not satisfied with some aspects of mobile telemedicine application.
- This study found that the telemedicine system introduced by MoH in KSA is positively viewed by patients.
- Provides them with quick access to a reliable and trusted source for them medical consultation.



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