

REAL-TIME TELEOPHTHALMOLOGY SATISFACTION IN RURAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Purpose: Teleophthalmology is expanding in utilisation and is increasingly replacing in-person assessment. It is therefore important that these programs are deemed appropriate by the patients serviced. This study assessed patient satisfaction with the Lions Outback Vision (LOV) real-time teleophthalmology video consultation (VC) service, linking patients in rural Western Australia to consultant ophthalmologists based in Perth.

Method: A prospective study to evaluate the satisfaction of patients undergoing VC with LOV in a three-month period. A questionnaire assessing demographics and satisfaction was delivered via telephone. Univariate and multivariate logistic regression analysis was performed to assess which features of the VC were associated with highest levels of satisfaction.

Results: 109 of 137 eligible patients completed the questionnaire (79.6%). 76 (69.1%) stated that overall they were 'Very Satisfied' with the service, 27 patients (24.5%) were 'Satisfied' with the service, and 5 participants (5.5%) reported 'Neutral' satisfaction. No one reported being either 'Dissatisfied' or 'Very Dissatisfied'. Those who felt they could easily explain their medical problems to the doctor via VC (OR 4.19), believed that telemedicine enables them to save money and time (OR 4.01), and older patients (OR 1.03) were significantly more likely to endorse highest levels of satisfaction with the VC.

Conclusion: This study demonstrates that there is a high level of satisfaction with VC. Given that past research has helped to establish the efficacy of teleophthalmology programs, current findings of high satisfaction suggest that teleophthalmology is indeed a viable alternative to face-to-face consultation for patients in rural areas.