TELE-CONNECTING REGIONAL HOSPITALS WITH A TERTIARY OPHTHALMIC CENTRE: THE RVEEH ?EYECONNECT?? EXPERIENCE

Purpose: To describe use of eyeConnect?, a tele- health service linking the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (RVEEH) to other Emergency Departments in Victoria. eyeConnect? consists of proprietary machines capable of clinical data collec- tion and anterior segment photography, with soft- ware relaying information for review to RVEEH. Methods: The ftrst 89 eyeConnect?consultations (June 2016 - June 2017) were reviewed for present- ing complaint, telehealth data ftelds (symptoms, ocular history, visual acuity [VA], Amsler grid, intraocular pressure [IOP] screening-device mea- surement, photos), response time, and consultation outcome. Patients advised to present to RVEEH were reviewed for VA, IOP, and diagnosis. Results: 69 (78%) consultations arrived from a sin- gle trial site (peripheral metropolitan), with 5 addi- tional sites established during the study period (20 consultations, 22%). Predominant presenting complaints were ?eye pain? (58, 65%), ?decreased/ loss of vision? (38, 43%), and ?red eye? (38, 43%), often in combination. Median machine-measured VA was 6/18. 60% had IOP screening; two patients registered high IOP, and nine registered borderline IOP. Photo packages were of high enough quality to be clinically useful in 66 (74%) consultations. Median response time was 29 minutes. 47 patients (53%) were advised to present to RVEEH, of which 42 attended. 70% of remeasured VAs were within two lines of referral. Seven patients required admis- sion at RVEEH, while 28 were followed up in RVEEH outpatients.
Conclusion: The eyeConnect? telehealth service provides a direct, structured avenue of communica- tion between Victorian Emergency Departments and RVEEH. With a total of 15 regional sites planned to receive this service, there is opportunity to improve the current format and technology to promote emergency-based and remote ophthalmic care.