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Using social media for telemedicine during the COVID-19 epidemic



The severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) causes a respiratory illness called 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) leading to a pandemic. Since there is currently no vaccine or designated specific drug treatment for COVID-19, the government can take necessary public health prevention and control measures to prevent the spread of the epidemic [1–3]. As the first country to discover COVID-19, China has taken strict precautionary measures. On January 23, 2020, China raised the national public health emergency level to the highest level [1]. These measures include closing schools and entertainment venues, prohibiting public gatherings, restricting access to and from the city, and so on. The Chinese government strives to raise public awareness of prevention and protection by providing daily monitoring and updates on websites and social media [4]. Nevertheless, COVID-19 is still a danger in China and other countries. Social media played an essential role during the COVID-19 epidemic. The government should support and encourage medical personnel to participate in science education on social media. Because the strict quarantine measures make it difficult for patients to see a doctor, it is urgent to establish an appropriate telemedicine and appointment system. At the same time, social media can also promote the development of telemedicine.

COVID-19 is officially a pandemic. Although the impact of the final course of COVID-19 is not yet fully determined, the disease is not only possible, but is likely to produce a serious disease, which may overwhelm the health care infrastructure. The emergence of the virus pandemic will make the public health system and community health service institutions face special and lasting epidemic prevention situation. Government officials and policy makers should try their best to avoid the shortage of medical resources. The COVID-19 pandemic made us realize that if an outbreak in a region of the world is not properly handled, people around the world will be threatened [4,5].

The strict isolation strategies have affected and challenged different medical areas. In many countries, dentists were forced to stop working during quarantine until further notification [5]. During the epidemic prevention and control period, individual clinics and outpatient departments in some provinces and cities in China were required to suspend operations [6]. Because of the difficulty of seeking medical treatment, it may cause the delay of treatment and aggravate the condition. Delayed treatment of certain diseases may even be fatal, such as epiglottitis, oral cancer, and so on. Physical discomfort and fear of the epidemic can also affect the psychological state of patients, leading to anxiety and anger [4,7]. Some chronic otolaryngology diseases require long-term medication. Because some drugs are prescription drugs, they are not available in pharmacies. The lack of drugs and the pain of illness also increase the anxiety of patients [7]. In addition, the

multidisciplinary treatment needs of suspected and diagnosed patients with COVID-19 pneumonia are challenging to meet.

Since there are very few telemedicine projects created temporarily, patients may have to pay. We think social media can solve this difficult problem, such as Facebook and WeChat (social media in China). Secure services channel can be established to provide health consultations or appointments for patients. Mobile applications based on image and text information can be used for instant communication and quick decision-making. Even if there are some limitations, this method can help people to judge the severity of the disease and make early diagnosis. Similarly, this alternative method helps to quickly eliminate the symptoms of SARS-CoV-2 and avoid long queues in hospitals and emergency departments, which is very beneficial for reducing the spread of the virus. In clinical work, we also actively inform patients of personal social media information and establish contact with patients, so as to provide patients with professional advice and follow-up services.

Fortunately, some doctors are working to spread the latest knowledge through social media, disseminate articles published by international authoritative magazines in the form of popular science, and conduct free medical consultation on social media [7]. In terms of scientific research, non-contact doctor-patient communication platforms can also be used. Establish a non-contact doctor-patient interactive network platform based on mobile Internet, including publishing and promotion, questionnaire registration, social media management and other processes. As an important information channel for preventing and responding to the COVID-19 epidemic, social media also helps global governments, health authorities and clinicians respond to future public health events [8,9].

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