



Title	Asynchronous Telehealth: Systematic Review of Analytic Studies and Environmental Scan of Relevant Initiatives
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Aim

To critically evaluate the available data concerning the use of clinical applications of asynchronous telehealth.

Conclusions and results

The overall quality of most original studies in asynchronous telehealth is poor. These studies, however, provide consistent evidence suggesting that this telehealth modality could lead to shorter wait times, fewer unnecessary referrals, high levels of patient and provider satisfaction, and equivalent (or better) diagnostic accuracy when compared with face-to-face consultations. In Canada, where the reduction in wait times for health care has become a priority, asynchronous telehealth could be an option to choose for improving access to specialized services. It is unknown, however, whether the benefits demonstrated in small local studies could be realized after wide-scale implementation.

Policy makers could play a role in helping to shape the future of asynchronous telehealth in Canada. By formulating pragmatic objectives with consistent and reasonable outcomes, policy makers and researchers could promote projects, eg, asynchronous telehealth triage services, that could increase the efficiency of the healthcare system and enrich the body of research.

Recommendations

None given.

Methods

We systematically reviewed the literature and used an environmental scan to help synthesize the practices of organizations that provide asynchronous telehealth services. A systematic search was conducted for studies on any modality of asynchronous telehealth. The studies were to be published in English in peer-reviewed journals and assess health outcomes, economic outcomes, and the impact of health services. The environmental scan was based on information available in the articles included in the systematic review, complemented by a

scan of 400 hits yielded by an Internet search using the Google search engine. Two independent reviewers screened all articles and extracted data, reaching consensus on the articles and data identified.

Further research/reviews required

Systematic reviews must be updated regularly to ensure that the knowledge is kept up-to-date, based on new evidence.