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How Telemedicine Service Helps People to Feel Secure During the Pandemic of Covid-19

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to give a brief explanation of how the world changed after the covid-19 outbreak. Thus situation forced people to adapt in order to survive this ongoing stressful life event. Almost all countries in the world began to apply social distancing policies just to protect people from the risk of getting exposed to the virus. As the result, people are getting hard to reach health facilities when they need them. Day by day, the numbers of active cases keep increasing and getting hard to control. Health is one of the important things in human life. Because if they don't take good care of their health, then something bad might happen. Indonesian government through The Ministry of Health created new regulation about telemedicine in order to give an alternative to solving health problems for those who are unwilling to leave the house or visit the nearest public health facility. Of course, there will always be pros and cons but as scientists, we should learn to see things objectively. That's why in this paper, we will discuss further how this service helps many people's lives and bring security in the so-called "new normal" or others may say "life after pandemic".

Keywords: covid-19, health service, pandemic, secure, telemedicine

Introduction

For years, people all over the world has been living in peace without having to be concerned about health issue. They can meet and gather freely, travel to any place on earth as they wish, or do other activities that involve a lot of people. But in March 2020 everything suddenly changed when the World Health Organization (WHO) announced a pandemic of Covid-19 that affected more than 118,000 people in 114 countries and took the lives of more than 4000 in the epidemic (WHO, 2020a). Since then, everything has changed, including in Indonesia.

As the world is confronted by the current pandemic of covid-19, every nation must be prepared to face this outbreak. Millions of people are losing their income and economic anxiety is felt worldwide (Bareket-Bojmel et al., 2021). Not to mention the rise prevalence of mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, psychological distress, and individual psychological well-being (Gray et al., 2020). Several studies have shown that healthcare workers experienced symptoms of depression, anxiety, and sleep disorder during pandemics (Setiawati et al., 2021). In an educational setting, students face a threat because the learning process relies on technology which not everyone could afford (Li et al., 2021).

Life After Pandemic

Not long after the announcement from WHO, Indonesia also did the same thing in order to protect people from covid-19. The President of the Indonesia Republic decided to establish the Covid-19 Task Force whose main duty is to accelerate the mitigation of this pandemic. As time goes by the Task Force was dissolved and then moved to Covid-19 Response Acceleration Task Force. Until 22 April 2022 there are 6,043, 246 confirmed positive in Indonesia. While globally, 505,817,953 people confirmed positive in 230 countries (Satuan Tugas Penanganan Covid-19, 2022).

Due to this condition and to prevent the spread of covid-19, health protocol policy has become mandatory in every activity. For example, people have to wash their hands frequently, wear a mask and have social distancing while interacting with others (Dea & Pinasti, 2020). This health protocol is even stricter when visiting public health facilities such as clinics or hospitals (WHO, 2020b). Because many health workers are infected by this virus while handling patients. That's why the Ministry of Health made special regulations to protect health workers and at the same time give health services properly.

As we know that many health workers lose their lives because of the covid-19 virus (BBC News, 2021). So it's urgent for the Ministry of Health to announce a new policy regarding the health service given, especially the consultation part which now is known as Telemedicine. As written in regulation number 20 established in 2019, telemedicine is a technology-based health consultation service provided by health workers consisting of diagnostic, treatment, disease prevention, research and evaluation, and sustainable education health service provider which aim for the sake of public health (Menteri Kesehatan, 2019).

According to Indonesian Medical Association (IDI), thousands of general practitioner and medical specialist registered in telemedicine application such as Alodokter, Halodoc, Klik Dokter, Aido Health, and Good Doctor (Badan Penelitian Pengembangan Kesehatan Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2020). Other resources mentioned the increasing use of telemedicine applications reached 600 percent in the year 2020 when Indonesia start facing a pandemic crisis (CNN Indonesia, 2020). Telemedicine has become a new alternative for people to reach professional healthcare services without worry the risk of getting exposed to covid-19.

Telemedicine: Pros and Cons

Every breakthrough made always brings pros and cons, and that also happened to telemedicine. Although the number of users keeps increasing, still there are also people who don't even know that telemedicine is exist (Jayani, 2022). At the beginning of the pandemic, people still use common ways to access healthcare services, by visiting clinics or hospitals. But later on, after the government applied strict policy as a mitigation of this pandemic, people start to use telemedicine as a new alternative (Yogadhita et al., 2021).

If we look back, actually the introduction concept of telemedicine has been proposed 20-30 years ago. Telemedicine is defined as the delivery of healthcare and exchange of healthcare information across distances (Craig & Patterson, 2005). Most of the initiators came from industrialized countries such as the USA. But lately due to pandemics, developing countries also apply the same thing to provide healthcare services, Indonesia for example. Unfortunately, most of the telemedicine applications came from a start-up company, not the hospital that has the most suitable resources and procedures for healthcare.

Although technology has developed very fast but challenges also arise for humankind in this 21st century. Pandemic is one of the biggest challenges we have to deal at this moment. We live in uncertainty for the past two years and many things have changed. Indonesia applies positive law, that's why as a state is obliged to protect and to respect individual rights. Including individual health rights which has become our concern at times like this (Siregar, 2021).

The Benefits of Telemedicine In Securing People's Health

There's no doubt that telemedicine is effective in certain situations, especially in response to the covid-19 pandemic. In the 21st century, technology and information have played important role in human life including healthcare services. Telemedicine itself focuses on the activity of curative medicine. According to the latest research, telemedicine is an effective way of reducing the limitations of having good healthcare services through pandemics (Wiweko et al., 2021).

In order to provide a successful telemedicine program, there are four factors needed (Segrelles-Calvo et al., 2016):

1. A clearly established objective, designed to respond to the perceived needs of the healthcare professional in a defined setting.
2. A leader which is a professional with vision and clinical experience to be able to detect needs and opportunities for improvement.
3. External partnership such as start-up company.
4. A project that is sustainable beyond the pilot study.

People should be optimistic about telemedicine because of several reasons, such as; the dependence on technology in almost all aspects of human life; empirical knowledge about telemedicine interventions or other curative medical activity; public awareness regarding the benefit of this service during the crisis; positive attitude among clinicians who experienced it firsthand (Bashshur et al., 2020).

Does Telemedicine Gives Security in Life?

Studies showed various impacts of the spread of covid-19 especially the ones that related to individual mental health. In the USA, psychological problems that occurred such as anxiety, overthinking, depression, loss of interest, and negative perception of general physical health (Le & Nguyen, 2021). While in Indonesia, data from The Ministry of Health found an increasing prevalence of mental health problems. Anxious feelings, worries, and mental pressure during isolation are a few examples of what's happening right now (Redaksi Sehat Negeriku, 2021).

All the things that happened nowadays created unique situations that lead from one to another circumstance. The threat of disease, financial problems, economic uncertainty, lockdown policy, and many other changes in life made people feel insecure. Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs, safety needs represent the second tier including the security of body, employment, resources, the morality of family, and of health (Maslow, 2010).

During the pandemic, public health facilities such as clinics and hospitals applied new regulations in order to protect healthcare workers from the infection of covid-19. On the other hand, this kind of regulation prevents people to access medical services freely. This may lead to a major health crisis, specifically for those whose condition was terminal. Developing telemedicine whose role is as a substitute for in-person care throughout the country and worldwide, can be a way out for the health sector at this time (Bashshur et al., 2020).

One thing that should be noted the majority of clinicians started using telemedicine with minimal planning or preparation. For example, the lack of technological familiarity could lead to misunderstanding between patients and healthcare professionals who provide service. Not to mention the rush to deploy this service during the pandemic resulted in technical problems that affect the quality of relations between patients and service providers.

Conclusion

The implementation of telemedicine service in fact started back 20-30 years ago but at that time, technology was still limited. Nowadays, people are getting used to involving technology in almost all aspects of life, including healthcare services. During a pandemic, safety has become a priority in order to protect and prevent the spread of the covid-19 virus. Health protocol policy is mandatory and State has the obligation to provide clear regulations to ensure the rights of patients and providers at the same time.

Although the majority of clinician has been registered with some telemedicine provider, still it would be better if the provider is a hospital or clinic instead of a start-up whose point of view is more to business compared to healthcare service. Learning from today's circumstances, a lot of insight should be considered as a suggestion for a better telemedicine service in the future.

This pandemic may be the beginning of the rise of telemedicine healthcare services. But we shouldn't rush over the situation and implement proper preparation to optimize this in real life. It has been proven that telemedicine becomes a solution when patients were in isolation. Through telemedicine, healthcare professionals can give consultations related to curative medical activity to patients.

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