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Abstract:

In 2020 the COVID-19 global pandemic presented a challenging scenario for the provision of healthcare. Telephone clinics were previously an under-utilised resource that has now been widely adopted due to the pandemic and social distancing restrictions to mitigate patient and clinician risk factors. Telephone clinics have previously been explored and demonstrated significant benefits in the timely provision of healthcare, was tolerated well by most patients and families whilst posing no significant increased risk. With previous published articles having described the utility of telephone clinics in the medical setting, we investigated its utility for post-operative follow up. This included pathologies such as simple lacerations, skin cancer excisions and nailbed repairs, and investigated whether there was a change in outcome for these patients compared to the previous year (pre-COVID). By demonstrating no statistically significant change in complications we propose that telephone clinics pose a substantial benefit for the busy plastic surgical unit outpatient department.

Introduction

Telephone clinic reviews can be a useful tool to ensure patients receive timely care via a method that is time efficient to the provider and acceptable to patients and families (Duncan et al 2019).

The global catastrophe that was COVID-19 pandemic presented our unit an opportunity to re—structure our outpatient department service to create specific phone clinic allocated times to reduce patient attendance to hospitals which might have put them at risk. We found was that a large number of follow up appointments could be done via phone, thus reducing cost, and maximising outpatient clinic time efficiency without a significant increase in the risk of post-operative complications.

We propose a scope of practice following our own experience of cases that would be suitable for phone consultation or follow up.

Biography

David Lee is an unaccredited registrar in Plastic Surgery in Australia. He is currently working at Monash Health.

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