

Video Consultations Uncut: A Systematic Review of the Benefits and Limitations Regarding Use as an Alternative to Face-to-Face Consultations in UK General Practice

Mihari de Soysa
University of Warwick

Background

Within general practice the term video consultations (VC) is often met with apprehension. However due to the recent surge in use of VC, we want to explore the potential benefits and limitations in order to identify whether it is a viable alternative to face-to-face consultations (FTFC).

Methods

This review was conducted by searching medical databases for existing literature related to video consultations in general practice. Papers were carefully screened, and data extracted based on pre-determined themes.

Results

Response to the use of VC was mixed with FTFC generally being favoured. However, many identified that VC were convenient for working patients, those with children and was also time saving. VC were also considered to be more beneficial than telephone consultations due to the visual aspect provided. Concerns were identified regarding workload and problems with technology and data security

Key Messages

Many patients are happy to use VC as an alternative to FTFC. It has been identified as improving accessibility to primary care however uncertainty regarding the technology and its security has also been highlighted. To combat this, we are already seeing publication of clearer guidelines regarding how and when to use VC. However, we recommend supplementing this with comprehensive guidelines regarding patient safety as well as thorough training on set-up and use. As use becomes more prevalent, further research will also be important.

