

Healthcare System Pertaining to Outpatients with Chronic Illnesses

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Funding: Laidlaw Undergraduate Leadership and Research Programme

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has significantly impacted outpatient care around the world. Due to risks to patients and staff, hospital appointments moved to telemedicine to protect the vulnerable [1]. The aim of this study was to develop an understanding of the satisfaction of persons who have a chronic illness and their telemedicine - based outpatient care during the pandemic. For the purpose of the study, the investigation was limited to three main chronic illnesses; arthritis, asthma and diabetes.

METHODS

Overview

The study was conducted using an instrument which has been validated previously in the study 'Patient Satisfaction With Telemedicine During the COVID-19 Pandemic' [5] with permission from Dr. Ashwin Ramaswamy. The Press Ganley Patient Satisfaction scale was used to measure the satisfaction in relation to hospital appointments during the pandemic.

Recruitment

Information on participation in the survey was advertised on the three national patient representative groups social media channels and through the TCD social media platforms. The data were collected from 17th June 2022 to 27th June 2022. There were 87 respondents.

Data collection tools and procedures

An online survey was used with 13 questions. Data were collected using Qualtrics survey platform and exported to SPSS version 21 statistical package for analysis. Descriptive statistics were computed and summarised in tables and figures. Qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis.

Ethics consideration and consent to participate

Ethical approval was obtained from the School of Nursing and Midwifery Ethics Committee, Trinity College Dublin. Each participant was given the participant information leaflet and informed consent was given before starting the survey. No personal identifiable information was collected.

RESULTS

Socio-demographic and behavioural characteristics

The mean age of respondents was 42.34 years. The largest response came from the 40 to 59 age range (Fig 1). Over 55% of respondents had diabetes (Fig 2). 85% of respondents were female (Fig 3) and the majority of respondents were from Leinster (Fig 4).

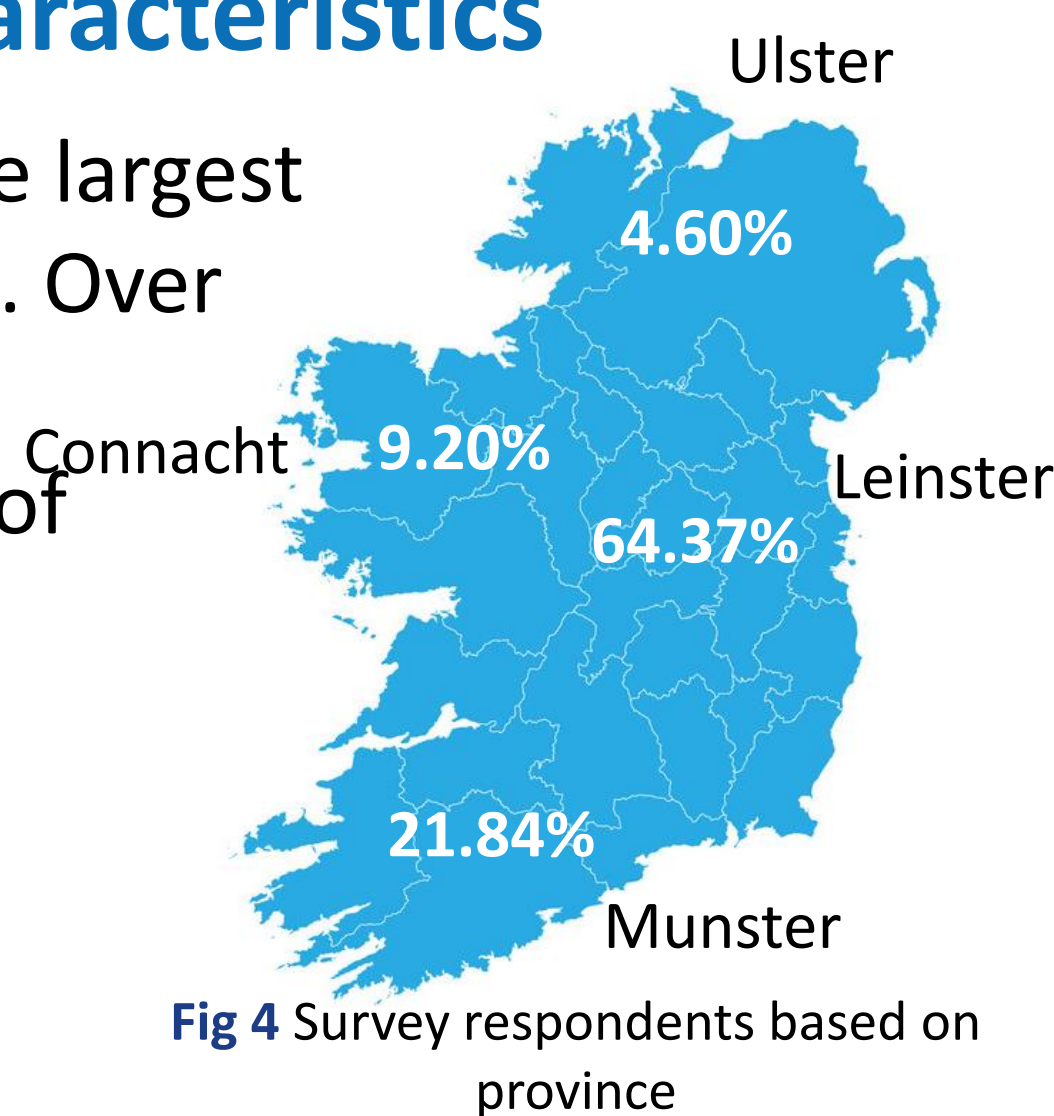


Fig 4 Survey respondents based on province

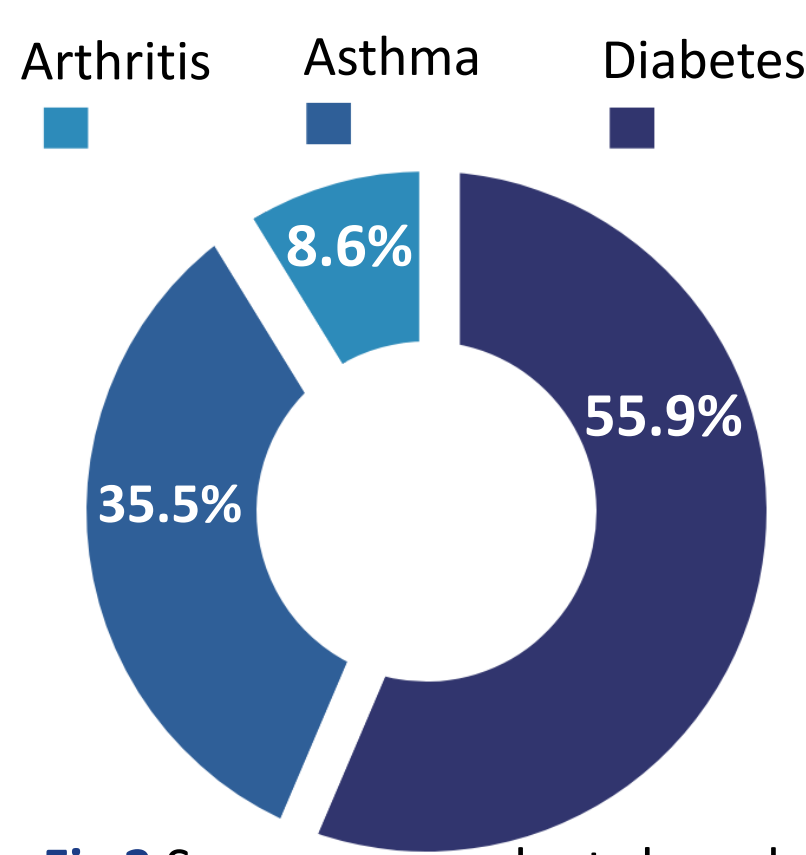


Fig 2 Survey respondents based on chronic illness



Fig 3 Percentage of female respondents

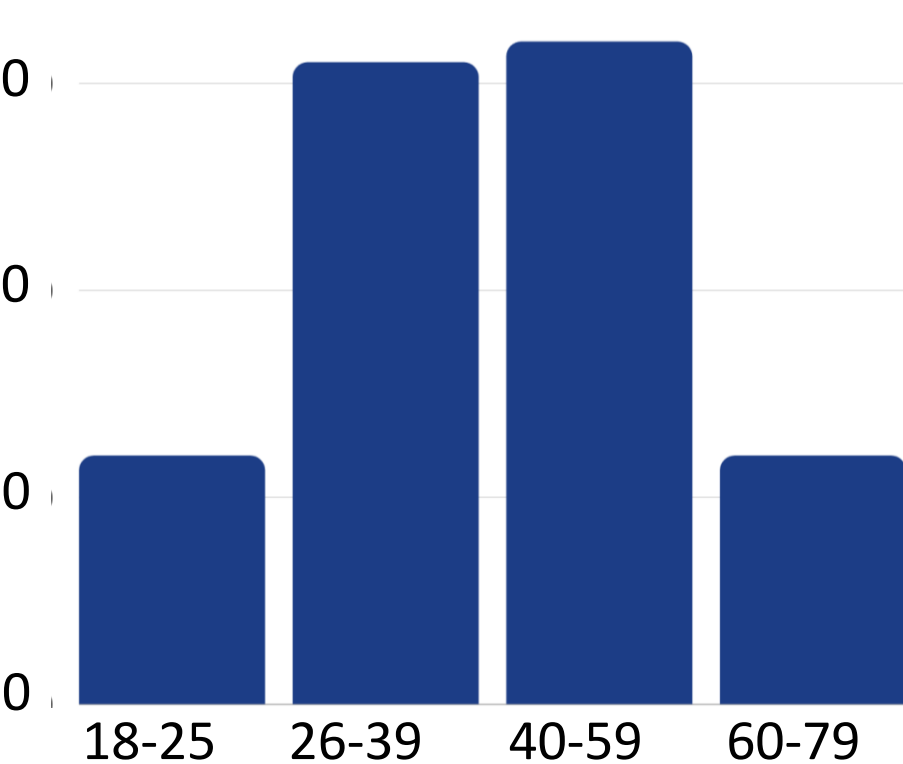


Fig 1 Survey respondents based on age

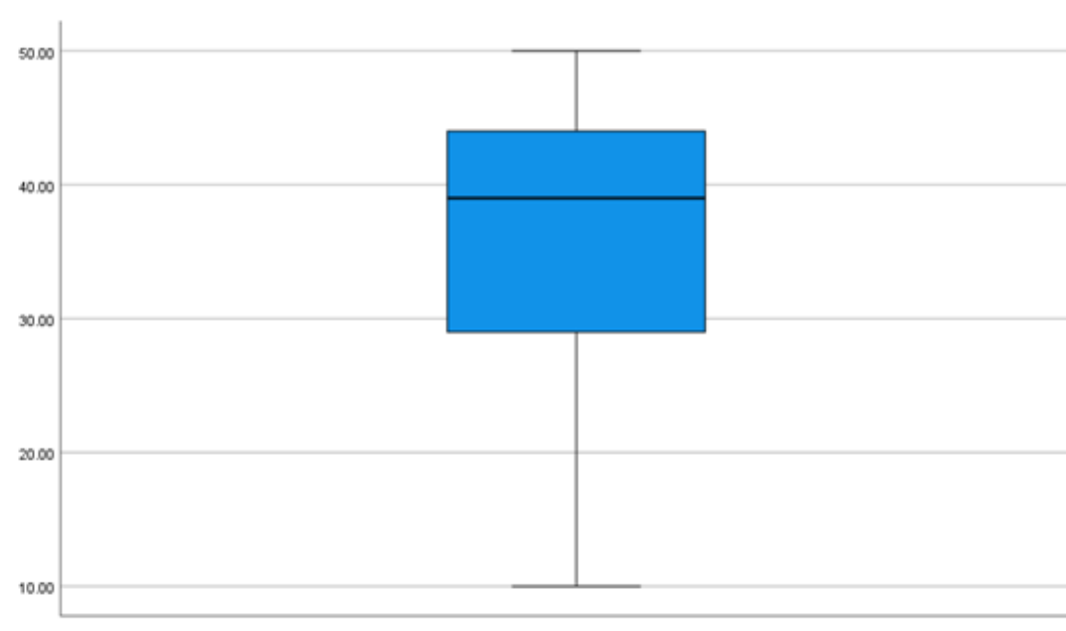


Fig 5 Measure of Satisfaction

The mean satisfaction of outpatients who experienced virtual hospital appointments during the COVID-19 pandemic was approximately 38.5 out of 50 (Fig 5) based on responses to the survey. This is above 25 out of 50 which indicates the satisfaction was greater than before the pandemic.

Factors contributing to differences in patient satisfaction

73% of people aged between 18 and 25 years felt their care was worse or significantly worse during the COVID-19 pandemic.

57% of patients who received telephone consultation during the COVID-19 pandemic felt their care was worse or significantly worse.

50% of patients with diabetes felt their care was worse or significantly worse during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Variable		Level of Satisfaction		Chi Square p value
		Worse or Significantly Worse N(%)	Same or Better N(%)	
Gender	Male	3 (25%)	9 (75%)	
	Female	32 (49.2%)	33 (50.8%)	
Age	18-25	8 (72.7%)	3 (27.3%)	0.196
	26-39	12 (38.7%)	19 (61.3%)	
	40-59	11 (39.3%)	17 (60.7%)	
	60-79	4 (57.1%)	3 (42.9%)	
Chronic Illness	Arthritis	1 (16.7%)	5 (83.3%)	
	Asthma	10 (43.5%)	13 (56.5%)	
	Diabetes	26 (50%)	26 (50%)	
Healthcare Professional seen	Doctor	11 (42.3%)	15 (57.7%)	0.020*
	Nurse	5 (31.3%)	11 (68.8%)	
	Doctor and nurse	12 (42.9%)	16 (57.1%)	
Type of hospital attended	Public	34 (50%)	34 (50%)	0.083
	Private	1 (14.3%)	6 (85.7%)	
Format of hospital appointments	Video	5 (45.5%)	6 (54.5%)	
	Telephone	28 (57.1%)	21 (42.9%)	
	In-person	13 (36.1%)	23 (63.9%)	
Type of appointment	New patient	1 (14.3%)	6 (85.7%)	0.100
	Follow-up	6 (40%)	9 (60%)	
	Consultation	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	
	Routine	15 (41.7%)	21 (58.3%)	

Table 1 Variables and their corresponding level of patient satisfaction *Statistically Significant

Qualitative analysis of patient care during the pandemic

Many respondents noted the cancellation and increase wait time of their hospital appointments during the pandemic, a reduction in ongoing health monitoring such as vital signs, PFTs and a lack of support in their chronic illness management.

"We had no outpatient appointments since covid I am awaiting an outpatient clinic since January 2020 scandalous!!!" P6

Many respondents noted there was an increase in communication difficulties while having telephone consultation. However, a number of respondents were happy with telephone consultation and would like the option going forward.

"Telephone consultation is good ... not having to travel to the hospital all the time. I would like a hybrid or option to have telephone or in person..." P35

CONCLUSION

Patient satisfaction with their healthcare during the pandemic was above average which shows that on average patient care wasn't adversely affected. However, certain cohorts in particular young people aged 18 to 25 and people who engaged in telephone consultations during the COVID-19 pandemic may require additional support going forward as these groups were adversely affected. There was also a variation in levels of satisfaction across chronic illnesses. 1 in 2 people with diabetes felt their care was worse or significantly worse during rather than prior to the pandemic. This warrants further investigation.

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Measure of patient satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic

63% of patients who received care during the pandemic rated the friendliness of their healthcare provider as good or very good.

28% of patients reported that the time their healthcare provider spent with them was poor or very poor.

23% of patients reported that inclusion in their health decision making by healthcare providers was poor or very poor.

23% of patients reported instruction received about their condition from their healthcare provider was poor or very poor.