

Perception, barriers, and willingness to implement tele-pharmacy among pharmacists in Palestine

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Background: One form of telemedicine is telepharmacy, which offers remote pharmaceutical services such as drug counseling, self-medication, drug monitoring, and assessment by a licensed pharmacist. It is unclear whether Palestinian pharmacists possess the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and willingness to practice telepharmacy.

Aims: The purpose of this study was to evaluate the present level of use and the factors that influence pharmacists' readiness to use telepharmacy in Palestine.

Methods: A cross-sectional descriptive study was carried out using an online validated questionnaire and targeting community pharmacists in West Bank, Palestine. The final questionnaire consisted of four sections; demographics, perception, willingness, and barrier section.

Results: A total of 375 pharmacists were enrolled in the current study. The median age was 30 (29–33). The majority of pharmacists (67.5%) were female, held a bachelor's in pharmacy (78.1%), and had less than ten years of experience (38.2%). Only 36.5% of the participants were aware of telepharmacy and (39.7%) had poor knowledge about Telepharmacy. The pharmacists showed high willingness and a positive attitude toward implementation in the pharmacy setting. The participants were most willing to utilize telepharmacy in Patient counseling and education 82.5%, communicating with care providers from home (83.2%), and identifying drug-related problems (81.5%). Health Literacy in the general population (78.9%), requiring uninterrupted Internet (74.5%), and high cost of establishment were the most often cited obstacles to implementing Telepharmacy. Regression analysis indicated that participants with higher education 2.1; CI: 1.6-3.1, $p < 0.001$) and men (OR= 1.68, CI: 0.91-2.3, $p < 0.001$) were more willing to use this service compared to women, and people with lower knowledge and education.

Conclusion: Despite the pharmacists' positive attitudes and willingness toward telepharmacy, several barriers were found, emphasizing the need for educational and training programs to increase pharmacists' knowledge of telepharmacy as well as for adequate funding support to address the issue of high operating costs.