

The development of telehealth in El Salvador

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Abstract

The telehealth since its implementation in Latin America as means for the approach of the health services to the population of many countries such as Mexico and Brazil have achieved taking big actions as for the application of the theme it is about, other countries that participate in the project of BID in telehealth achieved the sustainment of the bases that allow the impulse and the generation of policies and regulations that allow them to sustain the related activities. Telehealth covers the very important aspects for its applications, being telemedicine and teleducation. In El Salvador there still isn't the application of regulations related to telemedicine and that we have small signs related to it in an institutional level, but not standardized, if there are related fundamentals to teleducation with access to the population through official web pages from the country's Health Ministry as well as through guild medical institutions.
Keywords: Telehealth; Telemedicine.

Resumen

Desarrollo de la telesalud en El Salvador.

La telesalud desde su implementación en Latinoamérica como medio para el acercamiento de los servicios de salud a la población muchos países como México y Brasil han logrado dar pasos agigantados en cuanto a la aplicación del tema se trata, otros países participantes del proyecto de BID en telesalud han logrado sustentar las bases que permiten el impulso y la generación de políticas y normativas que permitan la sustentación de actividades relacionadas. La telesalud abarca dos aspectos muy importantes para su aplicación, siendo la Telemedicina y la teleeducación; en El Salvador si bien aún falta la aplicación normativas relacionadas al ámbito de la telemedicina y que tenemos pequeños indicios relacionados a ella a nivel institucional, más no estandarizados, si se cuenta con los fundamentos relacionados a la tele educación con acceso a la población a través de páginas web oficiales tanto del sitio Ministerio de Salud del país como de instituciones médicas gremiales.

Palabras-clave: Telesalud; Telemedicina.

Resumo

Desenvolvimento da telessaúde em El Salvador.

A Telessaúde desde sua implementação na América Latina como um meio de aproximar os serviços de saúde da população, muitos países como o México e o Brasil conseguiram avanços em termos de aplicação da questão, outros países participantes do projeto de telessaúde do BID conseguiram apoiar as bases que permitem a promoção e a geração de políticas e regulamentos que permitam o suporte de atividades relacionadas. A telessaúde cobre dois aspectos muito importantes para sua aplicação, sendo telemedicina e tele-educação; Em El Salvador, embora ainda exista uma falta de aplicação de regulamentos relacionados ao escopo da Telemedicina e que tenhamos pequenas indicações relacionadas a ele no nível institucional, mas não padronizadas, se tivermos os fundamentos relacionados a tele-educação com acesso à população por meio de páginas oficiais do Ministério da Saúde do país e instituições sindicais.

Palavras-chave: Telessaúde; Telemedicina.

INTRODUCTION

For WHO to achieve one of its principles such as universal coverage, it must have strategies, telehealth, since they are instruments to support health systems as it provides sustainability of the health system, in addition to improving management and demand, as well as the reduction of hospital stays.

The public administration in El Salvador is aware of telehealth as a health service, which since 2010 has been developing gradually, to eventually be at the level of Latin America. The general objective of the article is to carry out a general vision of the development of telehealth in El Salvador from the agreement of its implementation to its current situation.

METHOD

For the location of the bibliographic documents, different documentary sources have been used in the last five years. The following descriptors were used: telemedicine, telehealth, electronic health in El Salvador. A bibliographic search was also carried out, which included reviews, reading of books related to the topic, press releases and review of official web pages. In addition, a document search was performed using Google Scholar searches.

To understand the development of telehealth in El Salvador, official documents related to the legislation were also analyzed.

Then, the material was systematized trying to insert the development of telehealth in El Salvador in the context of Latin America and then, systematizing the current situation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of the principles of Health according to the WHO is that this is universal coverage, it is important to mention that telehealth in recent decades has generated great advances worldwide and has generated great advantages in health systems, this strategy allows this principle to be fulfilled, being universal, affordable and accessible, and reduce costs to both the health system and the patient, who is the most important, generating quality care and warmth.

Telehealth should be seen as an instrument to support each health system, and its providers and users, since it provides numerous advantages, one of the most important being the reduction of repetition of consultations and the decongestion of 2nd and 3rd level hospitals, and the valorization of the need or not of travel, the improvement of communication between professionals and accessibility to health services, and the updating in terms of medical advances and teleducation.

Telehealth as a concept is intimately related to the globalization of communications and technology worldwide, in the

case of Latin America is in the south where more advances exist and part of North America, however, at the national level El Salvador since October 2010 starts implementing telehealth, as a project driven by the Health Reform, by which it is kept in constant search and development of this issue.

The first part of the project, the diagnosis, was completed in order to be able to implement various projects, both for training and health counseling for family teams.¹

The public administration in El Salvador is aware that telehealth as a health service would reduce the waiting time and investment of a system and a patient and would also reduce costs, which can often be unnecessary, currently seeks to enhance the development of ICTs as they belong to the strategies that seek the development of a nation in the area of Health, using it as a strategy that pays to the Millennium Development Goals.

At an international level, the European Commission is funding a multitude of projects through calls focused on telehealth or Health. From a more global perspective, the United Nations through WHO or the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is also coordinating telehealth programs to train governments and promote good practice among Member States.²

Development of telehealth in Latin America

In recent years, interest in telehealth has grown, catalyzed recently by the application of legislation rewarding efficiency in the provision of health care. Advances in telehealth services reach many areas, including coverage of services outside normal hours (nocturnal radiology), emergency services (such as cerebrovascular accidents), some mandatory services (medical care for prisoners in prison) and the proliferation of multipoint teleconferencing for community health outreach programs. In addition, mobile health is experiencing explosive growth and could even become an innovation that will change the outlook for health care in the future.³

When we talk about telehealth in Latin America, the country that began to introduce these processes was Mexico to make the process of care more efficient, in 2009 graduates the first diploma in telehealth and telemedicine.⁴

Currently, the formulation of national telehealth projects, particularly in Brazil, Mexico and Colombia, has accelerated.

This fact, promoted by different initiatives of the countries of the region, has also been possible thanks to the articulation of actions of ECLAC, PAHO and the IDB. Among these, several publications on the development of telehealth in Latin America and the Caribbean produced by ECLAC and PAHO stand out; international seminars, forums and debates, organized by ECLAC, PAHO and the IDB; training processes for specialists implemented in Latin American universities with the support of PAHO and the IDB. Also, the Latin American Committee on Best Practices in telehealth,

which starts a certification process in 2012, is beginning to play an important role.⁴

However, there are still countries that do not have structured national projects and have not joined international telehealth networks in the region.

Current state of telehealth in El Salvador

El Salvador is one of the countries in Latin America whose GDP in public health expenditure 2019 is 2.41%⁵ which also has an ICT development index for 2010 of 2,894 representing a median income level corresponding to the ICT level⁴.

At the beginning of the 2010 decade, some Latin American countries began to create projects aimed at telehealth where the strategies of Panama (2002), Ecuador (2006), Colombia (2007), Brazil (2007), Peru (2007), El Salvador (2010), Guatemala and Venezuela (2012) emerged and, recently, Bolivia⁶ and it is here that El Salvador presents the first signs, elaborating a national telehealth program being one of the 12 ministries of Health signatory of the IDB4 project agreement; For the year 2011, El Salvador begins with the program of teleconsultancies, videoconferences and distance courses whose videoconferences are generally available from 2014 on the page of the Ministry of Health and are periodically updated to date⁷, as well as trade institutions such as El Colegio Médico del El Salvador which annexes to its platform the conferences given during the educational medical days⁸ so that as far as telehealth in the country is concerned, the greatest advance is in the situation of tele-education in medicine in relation to telemedicine.

Currently at the level of institutions, such as hospitals or first-level centers, there are internal management related to teleconsultancies through digital media that allow the approach of patients with the support of specialists, however, such management is not standardized through regulations for telehealth or telemedicine.

By 2019, some institutions have introduced the incorporation of PACS that allow access to clinical data of patients to all health professionals of the institution⁹ beyond that, there has been no evidence of a clear application of telehealth in El Salvador.

CONCLUSION

El Salvador is becoming small, but great efforts are being made so that, at the level of institutions, such as hospitals or first-level centers, there are internal management related to teleconsultancies through digital media that allow patients to be approached with the support of specialists, but, nonetheless, such operations are not standardized through telehealth regulations

The country still has a long way to go to achieve and

have a good system in terms of telehealth, and achieve the approach of health for all, as a universal right and to achieve these objectives requires greater investment in technology, better education in such systems and a rapprochement with private enterprise, to achieve this goal.

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