

# Response to “Telemedicine at a University Ophthalmology Practice During the Beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic” [Letter]

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## Dear editor

We would like to share the findings of our research on the use of teleophthalmology at a university practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of this study was to evaluate diagnostic accuracy, effectiveness, and patient satisfaction with telemedicine services provided by the Department of Ophthalmology at Stony Brook University.<sup>1</sup>

In this study, telemedicine visits were offered to both new and established patients who requested appointments between March 30 and June 2, 2020. Of the 783 patients offered telemedicine services, 520 patients (66.4%) accepted. Of these, 409 patients (78.7%) were established patients, and 105 patients (20.2%) had in-person follow-up visits. The overall diagnostic accuracy of the follow-up visits was 89.5%, although this accuracy varied across different ophthalmology subspecialties.

Additionally, among the patients who had in-person follow-up visits, 56.8% remained stable, 32.4% improved, and 10.8% worsened. We also found that established patients had more complex ocular histories and experienced a higher percentage of worsening symptoms compared to new patients. The oculoplastics/orbit subspecialty was the most prevalent in cases of worsening conditions.<sup>2</sup>

Post-telemedicine visit satisfaction surveys were sent to all patients, and 15.0% responded. Overall, patient satisfaction was 91.9%, although only 23.0% of respondents preferred telemedicine over in-office visits.

Based on these findings and a systematic review of telemedicine's effectiveness, efficiency, and patient satisfaction, we conclude that teleophthalmology can provide high levels of diagnostic accuracy and patient satisfaction, despite the challenges in implementation and the preference of most patients for in-person examinations; nonetheless, telemedicine can serve as an effective alternative for follow-up and emergency care during pandemic situations and beyond.<sup>3</sup>

We hope this research provides valuable insights for the development of telemedicine services, particularly in the field of ophthalmology. Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to publish these findings.

## Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this communication.

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