

POSTER ABSTRACT

Telemedicine from a Korean perspective: A Korean military telemedicine pilot project

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Introduction: One of the greatest challenges that Korea's healthcare system faces is to provide good quality healthcare to the population located in remote areas. However, demographical and geographical issues are present in delivering healthcare services in rural and remote areas. Also, isolated military units that are located on top of the mountains or islands near the border also face similar challenges. Telemedicine is considered an effective solution to the problem.

Methods: Since 2015, prior to the full-scale deployment of telemedicine, Ministry of Defense (MOD) and Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOH) is conducting a joint pilot project between a military hospital and remote military units to provide tailored healthcare services and to draw out improvements. This study is based on interim results.

Results:

- The 90% of 2,170 soldiers who experienced telemedicine service in 2016 say they were satisfied.
- Rate of healthcare services provided within 12 hours is improved from 35% to 83%.
- Early diagnosis of patients can prevent them from developing a serious illness.

Discussions: In-depth review is needed on how to overcome diagnostic errors due to remote equipment malfunctions and non-face-to-face consultations, and on how to persuade small-scale providers (clinics for instance) worrying that they may be deprived of patients by larger providers.

Conclusions: Applying information technology (IT) can overcome demographic and geographic problems in order to expand healthcare services for the remote residents.

Lessons learned: Discovering new values of integrated care through convergence of IT and healthcare.

Limitations: This pilot project is a remote healthcare delivery service for the military units only.

Suggestions for future research: There are medical ethics and legal disputes related to telemedicine. Nevertheless, because IT can improve many aspects of the healthcare fields effectively, practical research is needed for the convergence of medicine and IT.

Keywords: healthcare delivery; telemedicine; IT
