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CURRENT PERSPECTIVES OF TELEDENTISTRY

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Abstract: **INTRODUCTION:** Teledentistry can be defined as the remote provision of dental care, advice or treatment through information technology rather than through direct personal contact with any patient involved. Some of the main modes and methods used in teledentistry are electronic medical records, electronic reference systems, image scanning, teleconsultations and telediagnosis. **GOAL:** To report the current perspectives of teledentistry in the Brazilian scenario. **METHODS:** The research was carried out in the Virtual Health Library (VHL) database, using adjunct descriptors of the Boolean operators: Teleodontologia and Telehealth and Dentistry. The research language was English and Portuguese, and 5 articles were selected in the last 10 years. **RESULTS:** In Primary Health Care, teledentistry has proven to be an excellent tool to overcome geographic and territorial barriers, through tracking, active search, monitoring of priority and risk users, thus fulfilling the principles established by the SUS of universality, in addition to allowing contact between general practitioners and specialists. Teledentistry also reaches private services to carry out pre-screening and actions in preventive education, improving coverage and reducing costs and waiting times. **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS:** TeleDentistry is a technological instrument that, due to the good results, should have better investments and more studies need to be carried out so that it can have a greater extension in the insertion process in Dentistry.

Keywords: Teledentistry; Telehealth; Dentistry.

INTRODUCTION

The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) occurs as part of public dental health services in Latin American countries, such as Brazil, Colombia and Uruguay, to improve continuing education

and collaborative research between national and foreign institutions. In Brazil, through ICT, information was exchanged between universities and primary care professionals, adding values to the teaching-service relationship and being an innovative form of care and quality of service (CARRER et al., 2022).

In 2007, the National Telehealth Program was created to reach the remote population. In October 2011, it was redefined and expanded and named Programa Telessaúde Brasil Redes. The program promoted the exchange of information between health professionals and specialists, valid for the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of diseases. Teleconsulting can be performed in two ways: synchronous or asynchronous. In real time (online), the first is carried out through dialogues between PHC professionals and specialists. The second occurs through messages at different times (offline), which must be answered within 72 hours by the centers' specialists (COSTA et al., 2021).

With the COVID-19 crisis, the need to incorporate Teledentistry emerged. The use of ICTs to provide remote dental care can allow ESBs to carry out screening for emergency and urgent dental care, avoiding unnecessary visits by users to health units and providing non-essential services, avoiding close contact with users.

Teledentistry can be defined as the remote provision of dental care, advice or treatment through information technology rather than through direct personal contact with any patient involved. Some of the main modes and methods used in teledentistry are electronic medical records, electronic reference systems, image scanning, teleconsultations and telediagnosis. All applications used in teledentistry aim to bring efficiency, provide access to the needy population, improve the quality of care and reduce the burden of oral

diseases (CARRER et al., 2022).

Teledentistry, as a field of knowledge that is part of Telehealth, has been evolving in recent years, especially with emphasis on interactive teleeducation, teleassistance and the production of multicentric research. It can be defined as the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to exchange data and health information, in addition to providing health services in situations where it is necessary to overcome geographic, temporal, social and cultural barriers (CALDARELLI et al., 2016). However, there is a shortage of Teledentistry projects in developing countries, which has been attributed to the conservatism of decision makers, the lack of resources, infrastructure and ICT equipment (CARRER et al., 2022).

Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the current perspectives of teledentistry in the Brazilian scenario.

METHODOLOGY

This is a narrative literature review, in which searches were carried out in the Virtual Health Library (VHL) database, using the following adjunct descriptors of Boolean operators: Teledentistry and tele-health and Dentistry.

The research language was English and Portuguese. 28 articles were found, after applying the filter to publications in the last 10 years 2012-2022, in all languages and texts available in full, 21 articles remained, according to the inclusion criteria. Exclusion criteria were literature reviews and texts not available in full. 5 articles were selected to compose this work.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The World Health Organization already recommended to its member countries, even before the pandemic, Telehealth as a strategy to improve the quality of services, especially

in universal systems, such as the Unified Health System (SUS). Teledentistry opens up opportunities for oral health to resume providing various services remotely, such as: 1) Tracking, active search, monitoring of priority users, at risk and with systemic problems, suspected of COVID-19 and contacts, through Telemonitoring; 2) Initial listening, individual or collective educational activities, through Teleorientation; 3) Discussion of clinical cases to define the opportunity/need for operative procedures, matrix support, sharing, solving doubts among professionals and between them and educational and research institutions, by Teleconsultation, among others (CARRER et al., 2022).

In Dentistry, the development and application of these remote methods has been precarious, which has led teledentistry to be unknown by a large part of our colleagues, who are often suspicious of this “other way of doing” dentistry, which brings not only a loss of our professional development, but the possibilities of care we provide to our patients, an issue that has been improving in recent times (CARTES et al., 2012). In Rio Grande do Sul, for example, there is a very efficient service available to dentists from the Unified Health System, called “EstomatoNet”, which receives demand from dentists and primary care physicians, sending questions, clinical data and even photos, to assist in the diagnosis and management of cases 40. This same group even used the Whatsapp platform to exchange information between primary care professionals and teleconsultants from the telehealth network program in Rio Grande do Sul (CARRER et al., 2020).

The study carried out by SILVA et al. (2022), demonstrated the importance of telemonitoring for the monitoring, guidance and referral of people with Parkinson's. The author observed that there is a very large deficiency in the knowledge of these patients

both with regard to basic hygiene practices and information on oral health, as well as care for dental prostheses. However, virtual assistance guided these patients towards better habits and care and subsequent dental care, proving to be an excellent tool for an initial contact with the dentist.

COSTA et al. (2021) researched the profile of dental teleconsulting in the area of Pediatric Dentistry. The results showed that in the Primary Health Care (PHC) units there is a great demand for pediatric dentistry services. Since PHC networks do not have specialized care, the need for referral to specialized care can be avoided through teleconsultation, reducing unnecessary referrals. Since this system allows the exchange of information between health professionals and specialists, there is an improvement in the resolution of PHC and also reduces costs.

CORREIA et al. (2014), carried out a survey using secondary data on asynchronous teleconsultations in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, the results pointed to the search for Dentists as one of the most sought after by health users in the state. Among the teleconsultations, 61 responses were generated, on topics such as: oral health work process in family health, diagnosis of alterations in the mouth and face, use of medication, fluoride toxicology, management of periodontal disease in patients with diabetes, among others. There were also doubts about oral health, where one of the cases in which, based on photos attached to the system, provided support for the differential diagnosis of sarcoidosis and neoplasia in the upper lip, and due referral for treatment at another point in the network.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Teledentistry has proven to be an excellent tool for overcoming geographic and territorial barriers, through tracking, active search,

monitoring of priority and risk users, thus fulfilling the principles established by the SUS of universality.

In addition to allowing contact between APS general practitioners and specialists. Teledentistry also reaches private services to carry out pre-screenings, actions in preventive education and preoperative guidance. However, investments for this technology have not been sufficient for its implementation in many places in Brazil.

Finally, it can be concluded that teleDentistry is a technological instrument that, due to the good results, should have better investments and more studies should take place, so that it can have a greater extension in the insertion process in Dentistry.

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