

Tele-Web Dietitian Consultation Service Continued the Support to Community during COVID-19 Pandemic

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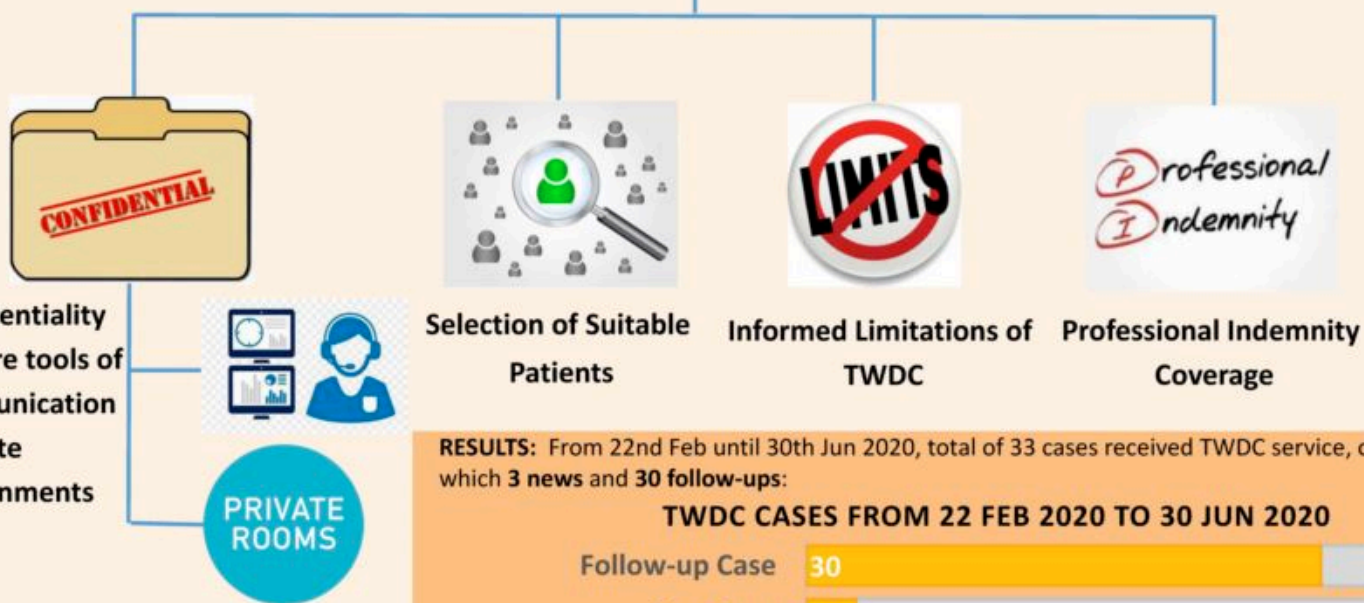


INTRODUCTION: COVID-19 pandemic has affected the ways of people receiving healthcare services due to social distancing measures; numerous non-emergency healthcare services including dietary consultations in the community were suspended or postponed. However, the increasing need for nutrition counselling service could be foreseen due to the pandemic and was likely to pose difficulties in maintaining a healthy diet. Our team pioneered Tele-Web Dietitian Consultation (TWDC) service to support patients in need of dietary advice while minimising the risks of infections.

METHODS: Since TWDC was limited in Hong Kong and we established the operation procedures by carefully considering relevant overseas guidelines from Dietitians Australia, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (US) and Health & Care Professions Council (UK).

They shared the commonality emphasizing on patients' confidentiality (i.e. security of environment and tools like telephone-call or appropriate online software in a private room). Selection of suitable patients, consent on informed choices, limitations of TWDC and professional indemnity coverage were also being emphasized.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



RESULTS: From 22nd Feb until 30th Jun 2020, total of 33 cases received TWDC service, of which 3 new and 30 follow-ups:

TWDC CASES FROM 22 FEB 2020 TO 30 JUN 2020



Major dietary problems presented in descending orders were overweight/obesity (54.8%); hyperlipidaemia (54.8%); pre-diabetes/diabetes (41.9%) and hypertension (19.4%). The three new cases in need required to consult dietitians for diabetic diet, cholesterol-lowering diet and nutritional health assessment respectively. The survey revealed 91% service users thought TWDC could assist them to achieve health goals while 82% service users reported they would use TWDC again in the future. The survey further showed that inaccessibility of the clinic anthropometric devices is the main factor put the service users off.



CONCLUSION:

Patients in need to seek medical nutrition therapy for obesity, diabetes and/or hyperlipidaemia management, TWDC service continued support at community clinic despite during COVID-19 pandemic and opened up opportunities in future for patients who were unable to attend clinics in person for other reasons. Future challenges including limited rapport building, inability of visual assessment, weaker sense of the non-verbal cues from patients and inaccessibility of the anthropometry measuring devices etc. will require further study in order to compare outcome differences with conventional dietitian clinic service

