

Review of: "Treading the Thin Line Between Health Ethics and Patient Care in the Application of Telemedicine: The Case of Sound Ethical Guidelines in Telemedicine in Sub-Saharan Africa"

Alan Taylor¹

¹ Flinders University of South Australia

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Review of "Treading the Thin Line Between Health Ethics and Patient Care in the Application of Telemedicine: The Case of Sound Ethical Guidelines in Telemedicine in Sub-Saharan Africa"

A nicely written paper. My comments fall into two parts: 1. Improvement of the paper 2. The role of ethical principles and their relation to the quality of telehealth services.

1. Improvement of the paper

Introduction

Title: Do you mean "The case for Sound Ethical Guidelines," and therefore you are arguing for their application? The existing title is only appropriate if you are reporting on their use.

Definition of telemedicine: ISO 13131:2022 Health informatics — Telehealth services — Quality planning guidelines (2021) defines a telehealth service as a "healthcare activity supported at a distance by information and communication technology service(s)". This is simple and can apply to a wide range of services.

Para 2: "Globally. Quick exchange"; The full stop looks out of place. Better to join the sentences and consider if you mean "consultations and advice" instead of "exchange."

Para 2. Reference needed for the COVID-19 statements.

Para 3 "elusive dream": Reference this statement or remove the sentence.

Para 3 " COVID-19 ,,,, transformed": Reference needed.

The current state of Telemedicine in SSA

Para 1. Is the reference to Chitungo supporting the statements in the second half of the paragraph? If so, make this clearer – e.g., "Chitungo state ... "

Para 2, The second half of this paragraph appears to be discussing South Africa. If so, make this clearer to the reader.

Maintaining ethical healthcare

This section appears to discuss issues around consent, communicating with the patient, and data protection. Can you make this clearer in the sub-title?

The case to have sound Ethical ...

Maybe “The case for Ethical ... for Telemedicine services in SSA” would be better.

General

General comment: Read the paper as someone who knows nothing about the topic to see where you should support a statement with a reference, and position the reference carefully.

General comment: Please describe the methods you used in undertaking this review. Then indicate the key results in each section of the paper.

The role of ethical principles and their relation to the quality of telehealth services.

Ethical principles are a part of and contribute to the quality of telehealth services. For instance, the Autonomy principle, applied to obtaining informed patient consent, can be thought of as an application of a “transparency” quality characteristic. ISO 13131:2022 Health informatics — Telehealth services — Quality planning guidelines (2021) provides guidelines for many other types of quality characteristics. Well worth a read if you can get hold of it through a Ministry of Health or a library.

One other thing, please: If you are interested in working on telehealth guidelines in the context of SSA, contact me via this website: <https://edevelopment.net.au/edevel/>