Has Telemedicine come to Fruition? Parents’ and Physicians’ Perceptions and Preferences Regarding Telemedicine

Introduction
The aim of our study was to evaluate both patient and physician perceptions, preferences, and acceptability regarding the use of the different modalities of telemedicine for various health problems.

Methods
We conducted a cross-sectional survey in Geneva in 2021. Parents and physicians completed an online questionnaire focused on digital literacy, acceptability, preferences, as well as barriers and facilitators concerning a variety of telemedicine modalities for different health concerns.

Results
- 222 parents and 45 pediatricians participated (78% women, 42% physicians working in private practice and 58% physicians employed by public institutions).
- Parents preferred the telephone for simple medical advice (64%), discussion of parameters (64%), acute or chronic problems (64% and 57%), and psychological support (62%).
- They valued emails for communication of blood tests (62%) and renewal of medication (57%).
- Pediatricians considered the phone and e-mail to be an acceptable modality for all the issues mentioned above.
- Video was considered acceptable for follow-up of patients with both acute and chronic diseases (30%).
- Parents’ main reasons for using telemedicine were avoiding travel (67%) and saving time (59%).
- Disadvantages were lack of physical examination (68%), technical problems (38%), and unsuitability (44%).
- Physicians feared the potential negative impact of telemedicine on the therapeutic relationship and insisted on the need for a facilitated access and a user-friendly format of online platforms.

Conclusion
The use of telemedicine has increased since the pandemic but both doctors and parents continue to prefer face-to-face consultations. Telephone remains more acceptable than video in most medical situations.