

# **An evaluation of tele therapy services during the COVID-19 pandemic at a university-clinic in Sri Lanka; a preliminary study**

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**Background:** Tele therapy is really the delivery of a large variety of therapeutic interventions through the use of telecommunications technology to connect clinicians and clients. Tele therapy typically employs webcams, audio headsets, and videoconferencing software to enable synchronous interaction among clinicians and clients. The primary outcome of this study was describing a tele therapy program at a university clinic and an evaluation of patient satisfaction of speech and language therapy services. The study also aimed to document challenges faced by patients and their families in accessing SLT tele services at Ayati.

**Methods:** The study methodology employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Due to health-related restrictions in face-to-face direct meetings because of government regulations related to Covid 19, data were collected through self-administered online questionnaires and translated to Tamil and Sinhala. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants. The data were collected in three languages (English, Sinhala, Tamil). The study included 100 participants who had registered for continuous paediatric or adult SLT services via tele therapy at the Ayati centre or had participated in at least one session of tele therapy and could complete a questionnaire with or without the assistance of a proxy. The quantitative data were analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software, while the qualitative data were analyzed with the Ritchie Spencer (1994) framework analysis.

**Results:** During the COVID -19 outbreak in Sri Lanka, the major purpose of this study was to assess the quality of teletherapy services and patient satisfaction at a university-based clinic. The overall satisfaction with teletherapy was positive, with a high level of satisfaction in using telehealth to get speech and language teletherapy services, a majority (n=82) noting to use telehealth services for SLT in the future. However, teletherapy patients confront difficulties such as insufficient internet connectivity, which was reported.

**Conclusion:** Future research may focus on the specific issues described here in order to truly comprehend how to solve them. Future research could include physician experiences to better understand the current state of telehealth services for Speech and Language Therapy.