

# Introduction to the special issue on advancements in telehealth

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In this special section of WORK, authors focus on the advancement of telehealth within the medical field. Special consideration is given to telehealth and artificial intelligence for the prevention and treatment of musculoskeletal disorders across various occupations. However, this section of WORK is not limited solely to this aspect of telehealth, and we have welcomed the submission of manuscripts concerning various related topics. This special section presents multiple novel and practical achievements in telehealth, through the publication of seven articles, including various sub-types of articles written by experts from Iran, the United States of America (USA), Malaysia, India, and Saudi Arabia. Our team has been thrilled to be a part of this illustrative special section. In this guest editorial, we are reviewing some of the interesting findings presented by our international colleagues. We would additionally like to thank WORK for their collaboration in bringing this special section to fruition.

In the first article written by Davenport et al., entitled “Educational competencies for telehealth physical therapy: Results of a modified Delphi process”, it was concluded that consensus-based edu-

cational competencies identified in their study could be useful as a guidance in knowledge and skills related to the provision of physical therapy services via telehealth services. In the second article entitled “Evaluating the impact of work from home policies on Google search trends related to ankle surgery during the COVID-19 pandemic” authored by Wu et al., a unique use of an internet-based search engine was employed to assess the impact of the pandemic on interest on specific topics related to ankle surgery. Several topics seemed to garner amplified attention during the pandemic, including ankle arthritis and ankle bursitis, as measured by increased Google search metrics. In contrast, post-pandemic search metrics yielded decreased interest for nine terms. Ankle pain and ankle tendinitis searches were decreased post-pandemic. As tendinitis is considered an overuse condition, this decrease may indicate pandemic-related decreases in overall activity. In another article written by Purushothaman et al., entitled “From home to health: Telerehabilitation’s contribution to physical activity and quality of life in young adult teleworkers”, the authors again focused on similar issue related to the work from home. In this investigation, telehealth was used to provide rehabilitation intervention to improve the level of physical activity and quality of life among remote workers. Using the International Physical

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Activity Questionnaire-Short Form (IPAQ-SF) and the Health-Related Quality of Life (HRQOL-14) questionnaire as metrics, the authors demonstrated significant improvements in both physical activity and quality of life among remote workers following implementation of a short-term, telerehabilitation intervention.

Other manuscripts within this series have explored related topic within the field of telehealth. In a commentary entitled “Leveraging and learning from the Long COVID experience: Translating telerehabilitation into practice” written by Gustavson et al., the authors provide a tutorial in translating telerehabilitation principals into practice using the available experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, based on several key action steps. Following this article, Behboodi Moghadam and Bahramnezhad in their letter entitled “The role of telestroke among pregnant mothers: Groundbreaking innovations in maternal healthcare” attempted to attract the attention of researchers to the importance of interventions geared toward recognition and treatment of maternal stroke through virtual means (termed “telestroke”). These authors seek to revolutionize maternal healthcare by providing timely and specialized care to pregnant women at risk of stroke. As they have highlighted, there remains a need for conducting research in this field, as the potential benefits of telestroke are far from realized and could have far-reaching implications in maternal-fetal medicine.

In a scoping review entitled “Ethical considerations in telehealth and artificial intelligence for

work-related musculoskeletal disorders: A scoping review” written by Karaibrahimoglu et al., the importance of attention to the ethics of AI and telehealth was discussed. Based on the findings, the authors note a lack of standardized rules and guidelines that should be defined clearly. Finally, in a narrative review entitled “Utilization of telemedicine for diagnosis and follow-up within foot and ankle orthopaedic surgery: A narrative review of the literature”, Talaski et al. introduce telemedicine as a supplement for traditional foot and ankle clinical care. This article highlights the benefits of telemedicine in foot and ankle orthopedics.

Overall, this special section of WORK has helped demonstrate the importance of telehealth and related subheadings in the prevention and treatment of different varieties of health-related issues. While several important findings are presented, a common theme across each of these investigations is the lack of research in this area. Thus, more high-quality research is needed to ascertain whether the provision of healthcare via internet-based platform meets quality and patient satisfaction standards, while remaining cost and time efficacious.

#### **Conflict of interest**

None to report.