



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Introduction of telemedicine as a new service for providing healthcare and medical services to prisoners

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TO THE EDITOR:

Given the importance of this issue, I want to discuss the relationships between diseases, environmental conditions, and access to healthcare services in prisons. Considering the health of prisoners and related concerns, I have decided to highlight the intersections of diseases, environmental conditions, and access to healthcare services in prisons. By presenting relevant analyses and evidence, I aim to discuss some of the progress made and future solutions, and propose a practical and effective solution to improve these services. Furthermore, by presenting evidence and referencing recent research, I will examine the impact of telemedicine on access to specialized care for prisoners and reducing the costs associated with transferring them to hospitals.

In prisons, the health and medical care of prisoners are among the major challenges that require innovative and effective solutions. In recent years, with significant advancements in information and communication technology, we have witnessed remarkable transformations in the delivery of healthcare services. One prominent example of these changes is the provision of telemedicine services (1).

Due to unfavorable conditions such as overcrowding, food poverty, violence, lack of light and fresh air, prisons are known as suitable environments for the spread and transmission of

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diseases. Additionally, drug use, tattooing, and unhealthy sexual relationships are also factors that contribute to the spread of diseases and infections in prisons (2)

Based on the available evidence, incarcerated individuals in prisons are faced with issues related to substance abuse, ethical and behavioral problems, and mental health issues. These individuals, compared to the general population, have a much higher prevalence and incidence of diseases (3).

It is worth mentioning that many prisoners belong to marginalized sectors of society, hence the likelihood of contracting both communicable and non-communicable diseases in this group of individuals is higher. The prevalence of diseases such as AIDS, hepatitis B and C among prisoners is significantly higher compared to the general population (4). These issues lead to an increased need for healthcare services in prisons, but due to the specific conditions of the prison environment and existing limitations, access to these services is very challenging (1). Moreover, inadequate space and necessary facilities for accommodating prisoners can severely impact their health and well-being. Additionally, many reports indicate that prisoners in many cases do not have access to sufficient and adequate food, which can lead to the development of physical illnesses and exacerbate underlying conditions (4). Therefore, there is a need for greater sensitivity and care to support the health of prisoners (5). Telemedicine technology, which utilizes direct communication between a physician and a patient remotely through communication technologies such as video conferencing, provides prisoners with the opportunity to consult with specialist doctors outside the prison. This capability allows patients to remotely consult with specialist physicians about their condition using this technology, without the need for physical presence. By leveraging telemedicine, prisoners in the confined environment of the prison have access to medical services. This method can help improve the health status of prisoners and reduce the need to transfer them to in-person treatment centers. Utilizing telemedicine in prison facilities is an effective way to improve access to specialized care for prisoners and reduce the costs associated with transferring prisoners to hospitals for consultation (6).

Considering that prisoners have fundamental human rights, attention should be paid to the observance of their physical and mental health rights. If the main purpose of prisons is rehabilitation and treatment, the necessary hygiene supplies and facilities should be provided for prisoners so they can maintain their health and prevent communicable diseases. Otherwise, disregarding the health rights of prisoners can have negative impacts on their physical and mental health (7).

Overall, the use of remote health technology can help populations that generally have less access to healthcare services, including prisoners, and improve their access to medical services. Improving the health of prisoners requires a combination of different and innovative solutions. The use of telemedicine and changes in policies and institutions within the prison healthcare system can facilitate improved access to medical services and reduce the spread of diseases in these environments. These methods can accelerate the improvement of healthcare in prisons and lead to a reduction in health and medical issues in these settings.



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