**DEFINITION**

eHealth readiness: a patient’s ability to locate, understand and interpret health information from electronic sources, and to utilize this information to make decisions relating to their health.

**OBJECTIVE**

To understand the eHealth readiness of patients coming to the Aravind Eye Hospital Tertiary Center in order to leverage this understanding for the future provision of eHealth resources.

**APPROACH**

**CROSS-SECTIONAL INTERVIEW-BASED SURVEY**

- Conducted in Tamil Nadu
- Total sample size of 60 patients
  - Free hospital and paying hospital
  - All clinic represented except pediatrics

**COMMERCIAL SAMPLE**

- Within each clinic, participants selected randomly to receive an interview

**AVERAGE LENGTH OF SURVEY:**

15 minutes

**INTERVIEWER INPUTS:**

- Survey responses were directly sent to a REDCap form

**RESULTS**

- 83% of patients have access to a smartphone
- 62% of patients actually use the smartphone they have access to
- 90% of patients list phone call as one of the best ways for Aravind Eye Hospital to reach them
- 37% of patients either prefer teleconsultation or have no preference between in-person and teleconsultation
- 52% of patients’ households have not utilized digital payments or they are not aware of its usage

**IMPLICATIONS**

- Future eHealth implementations should utilize phone call interventions to maximize patient reach
- Aravind patient app should be released in paying hospital first
- Incorporate digital payment services, without fully replacing cash transactions
- Patients are not confident making behavioral changes based on health information found on the internet

**ABSTRACT**

The integration of technology in healthcare has revolutionized the way information is accessed, shared, and utilized. The emergence of eHealth has opened up new possibilities for improving patient care and empowering individuals to take an active role in managing their health. As India, and Tamil Nadu, rapidly develops, it is crucial to assess the readiness of patients to embrace and utilize eHealth resources effectively so Aravind Eye Hospital (AEH) can determine what kinds of eHealth interventions or resources would benefit its patients. By exploring patients’ knowledge, understand, and interpret health information from electronic sources, as well as their willingness to adopt digitally disseminated information in health-related decision-making processes, we can identify key areas of strengths and areas that require intervention. The present study sought to determine the current digital and eHealth habits of patients and patients’ attitudes toward the future implementation of eHealth resources. First, a questionnaire was developed via expert interviews and focus group discussions. In the cross-sectional interview-based survey, 60 patients from the Madurai Tertiary Center were surveyed. The 27 paying patients and 33 free patients came from all clinics except pediatrics. Convenience sampling was utilized, and interview bias was avoided by randomly selecting patients from within each clinic. The physical setting for the interviews was private spaces within the hospital while the patient was waiting for their doctor’s exam. Results thus far suggest that a majority of patients are reachable by phone call and receptive to phone calls from AEH. Interestingly, while an average of 15 minutes to complete the survey, 83% of patients have some access to a smartphone and 62% of patients actually use the smartphone they have access to. 90% of patients list phone call as one of the best ways for Aravind Eye Hospital to reach them. 37% of patients either prefer teleconsultation or have no preference between in-person and teleconsultation. 52% of patients’ households have not utilized digital payments or they are not aware of its usage.

**APPENDIX**

**QUESTIONNAIRE STRUCTURE**

- **Feature Phone Ownership**
  - No phone
  - Feature phone
  - Smartphone

- **Personal Phone Usage**
  - Access to feature phone
  - Access to smartphone
  - Access to both

- **Digital Payment**
  - Mobile payment
  - Cash payment

- **Online Survey**
  - WhatsApp groups
  - Social media
  - Email

**TABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature Phone Ownership</th>
<th>No Phone</th>
<th>15%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to phone</td>
<td>19 (95%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to feature phone</td>
<td>14 (73%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to smartphone</td>
<td>13 (64%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: All percentages rounded to the nearest whole number.*

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The authors acknowledge the cooperation of the patients who participated in the study. They also thank the Aravind Eye Hospital staff for their support and assistance. This work was supported by the Aravind Eye Hospital Foundation. This study was registered with the International Clinical Trials Registry Platform (ICTRP) as Study ID: INCTRI/2021/04/006973. The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest. This paper was prepared with the support of the Aravind Eye Hospital Foundation. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards laid down in the Declaration of Helsinki.

**Sage Leland**, Dhivya Ramasamy, Munugur G, Jerome Selvaraj

1. University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA
2. Senior Faculty, Lions Aravind Institute for Community Ophthalmology, Tamil Nadu, India
3. Media Executive, Professional Education, Aravind Communications, Aravind Eye Hospital Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India
4. Media Executive, Research Associate, Aravind Eye Hospital Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India

**CONTACT**

Dhivya Ramasamy

+91 98417 54231

Media Executive, Aravind Eye Hospital Madurai, India