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The (online) patient will see you now, Doc: primary health care for all through telehealth - a workshop

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Background & Aim: in the last few years there have been rapid developments in secure mobile technologies and significant reductions in technology and data transfer cost. Coupled with a seemingly unstoppable and unmanageable increase in hospital visit and admission cost, Health Care Systems simply must adapt to remain viable. Telehealth offers one solution, making it possible to deliver Primary Health Care to everyone remote from traditional Primary Health Care facilities. The workshop aims to develop forward-looking competencies and comprehensive strategies to attain a desirable future implementation of telehealth delivered Primary Health Care.

Methods: Interactive Backcasting will be used to assess a future scenario in which Primary Health Care is made accessible to all through the provision of Health Care at a distance (telehealth). Small working groups will analyse this future scenario, each group taking one of the following perspectives: the email consultation, the “chat” consultation using instant messaging, the real-time video consultation, the virtual house call through Virtual Reality, the DIY consultation through smartphones and health wearables, and the Artificial Intelligence consultation. The following factors will be considered: feasibility with state-of-the-art technology, obstacles and opportunities along the way, the biggest challenges of implementation and how they can be overcome, and an implementation plan including milestones. At the end there will be a plenary session during which group outcomes will be presented along with discussions of the interventions, opportunities and obstacles on the way to the future scenario.

Results: This workshop will allow participants to gain insight into concrete present-day interventions that have the potential to shape future consultations delivered through telehealth.

Conclusions: Family physicians must take charge of the concept development of telehealth care, thereby making Primary Health Care accessible to all.