BACKGROUND: Directly Observed Therapy for individuals living with tuberculosis (TB) is a proposed standard of care, however high resource demands from health care systems prevent adherence. We examined a mobile health (mHealth) intervention as a low-cost alternative to observed therapy for patients in between clinical appointments.

INTERVENTION: WelTel is a centralized, secure, web-based digital health platform allowing communication between healthcare providers and clients via text messaging, phone, or video. WelTel was introduced to the BC TB Outreach program to centralize communication with enrolled patients, who received regular text-message check-ins; correspondence history and notes made by healthcare providers were accessible to other providers on the platform. Only SMS and phone calls were used in this pilot. Focus groups were held with outreach workers and nurses to qualitatively assess the feasibility, acceptability and transferability of the platform.

RESULTS: The program succeeded in replacing existing individual provider-to-client messaging practices. Early assessment revealed perceived improvements in continuity of care and communication between patients and clinicians. Key thematic findings were improved interactivity and support for patients as the program progressed. However, concerns surrounding language differences and clinical integration challenged implementation. Variability in uptake between outreach teams limited universal acceptability, suggesting a need for ongoing provider training.

CONCLUSIONS: Digital health technology has potential to enhance tuberculosis services through improving patient care continuity and enhancing management of healthcare resources. We propose a future pilot of mobile video DOT for TB patients requiring more intensive support and monitoring.

Themes:

Check (highlight) the most applicable theme according to the abstract.

| Innovation and Technology | Health and Wellness | Culture and Society | Sustainability and Conservation |

Comments:

Very clear and organized abstract. Suggest to define what Directly Observed Therapy is when it is introduced.