

## Introduction

- The fear of being infected by the covid-19 virus created Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) which explicitly affects the well-being of the elderly in Bangladesh.

## Objectives

- The objective of this study was to evaluate the outcome of GAD management through a telemedicine consultation.

## Methods

- Study design: Two-armed double blinded randomized controlled trial.

### Intervention @

- Simple randomization method was used to allocate participants into intervention and control group.



Telemedicine consultation

### Control @

- Allocation concealment was ensured.
- An expert medical consultant conducted the cognitive behavioral therapy to reduce pandemic induced GAD anxiety using '333' rule via interacting video conference.
- The telemedicine consultation was conducted once/week for total 5 weeks.
- Statistical analysis was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the intervention using SPSS (version 26) statistical software.



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## Results

- A total of 198 GAD patients were allocated in intervention (N = 73) and control (N = 70) group.
- The mean age was 58.16 (SD  $\pm$ 1.42) years.
- Sociodemographic variables as age ( $\chi^2=1.92$ ,  $p=0.38$ ), gender ( $\chi^2=2.57$ ,  $p=0.79$ ) and smoking status ( $\chi^2=2.74$ ,  $p=0.62$ ) was not statistically significant.
- Employment status ( $\chi^2=6.52$ ,  $p=0.019$ ) and area of residence ( $\chi^2= 5.19$ ,  $p=0.047$ ) was statistically significant between the two groups.
- The intervention using telemedicine video consultation treatment module had 5.192 ( $p=0.03$ ) times more positive significant effects to the elderly GAD patient compared to control group.
- The rural patients were less likely to get anxiety intervention treatment via telemedicine video consultation than urban elderly GAD patients ( $p=0.017$ ).
- Being unemployed status was not able to acquire anxiety treatment outcomes among GAD patients via telemedicine video consultation ( $p=0.038$ ).

## Key findings

- ❖ *Employment status was important factor to be considered.*
- ❖ *The telemedicine video consultation had positive impacts to improve mental health.*
- ❖ *The rural patients had limited access to get telemedicine video consultations.*

## Discussion & Implications

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, Bangladesh has been implementing telehealth services to promote and protect public health, risk communications, contact tracing, hot spot identification and telemedicine services.
- The current growth of telemedicine is being utilized by more healthcare practitioners and patients in a wide variety of forms to minimize inequality and barriers to access health care.
- The current study provides the positive impact of telemedicine consultation on GAD management and guides future telemedicine consultation as an interventions tool to manage other morbidity and disease burdens among the elderly.
- Strengthening the current telemedicine services and supporting remote rural areas through digital health technologies should be prioritized in the post-covid phase.
- The telemedicine services will not only improve mental health support but also will improve chronic disease management to serve the population in need.