Multidisciplinary teleconsultation in developing countries

Michelangelo Bartolo¹ and Fabio Ferrari²
¹San Giovanni-Addolorata Hospital, Italy
²La Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

Global Health Telemedicine (GHT) is a non-profit organization created in September 2013 in charge of offering specialized medical tele-consultation to Sub-Saharan Africa medical centers. Through a particular software we enhanced, the local doctor can live submit a request to the GHT volunteer specialist attaching clinical question, triage, anamnesis, previous medical examinations and laboratory exams, essential instrumental tests, pictures and videos. Simultaneously, through an SMS, the italian specialist receives the tele-consultation request inviting him to log in the platform in order to proceed to reply. The requesting doctor immediately receive the required advice. Currently the active branches are eight: Cardiology, neurology, ophthalmology, internal medicine, radiology, infectious diseases and dermatology. Twelve GHT centers opened in Central and Southern Africa: Four in Tanzania, three in Malawi, two in Mozambique and one in Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo and Togo. Each GHT center supports already existing medical centers and is equipped with basic instrumentation as electrocardiograph, pulse oximeter, back light panels, scanner for x-ray film and internet acces for sending tele-consultation requests. In twenty months activity we provided more than 2500 tele-consultations receiving an average of 30 weekly requests. Cardiology is the most required branch with 2000 tele-consultations (86%) followed by infectious diseases with 150 (6%) and radiology with 60 (3%). Most of these came from Arusha-Tanzania (1257 requests, 50%) and from Beira-Mozambique (750, 26%) which are the first GHT opened centers. The GHT volunteer doctors involved in the project are fifty working in different italian cities and contexts and the average response time is about 17 hours. Our experience clearly shows that the increase in life expectancy in developing countries in which we are involved caused the increase of chronic and before unknown, degenerative diseases as the cardiovascular and the metabolic one. Some of these diseases need a local outpatient tratment and receiving an expert second opinion as a telemedical one would positively impact the patient outoming.

Biography
Michelangelo Bartolo is the Director of Telemedicine Department in S. Giovanni Hospital, Italy. He is the author of about 50 publications in the field of Vascular Disease and Telemedicine Service. In 2005, he has been registered as Medical Practitioner from the Medical Council of Tanganyika (Tanzania, east Africa).

michelebartolo@gmail.com