

Assisted teleconsultation in an outpatient pharmacy: results of a pilot study in Geneva, Switzerland

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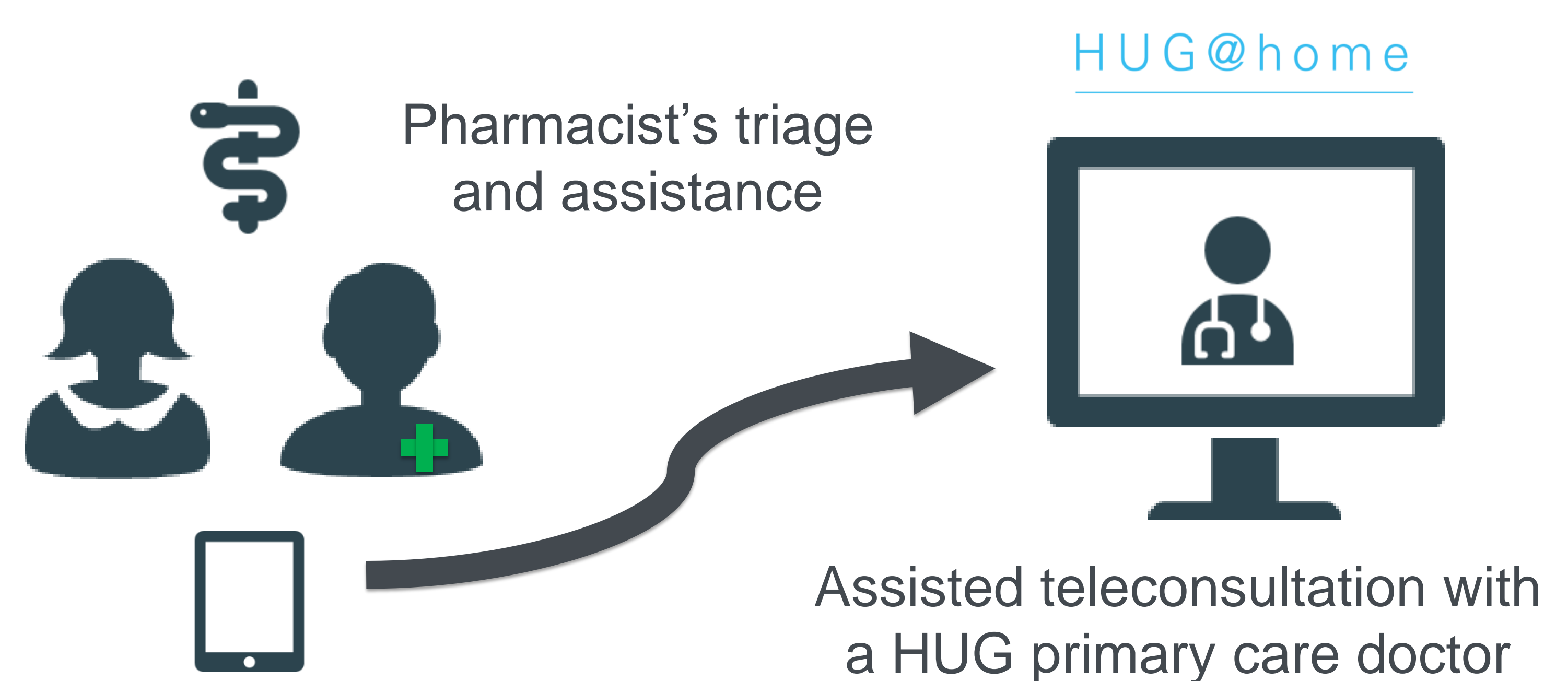
Introduction

Assisted teleconsultation (ATC) is the act of telemedicine involving on one side a patient in the presence of a healthcare professional (HP) and the expert HP on the other side. ATC in outpatient pharmacy may be an alternative to the emergency room for patients with a semi-urgent medical problem [1]. It might avoid emergency consultations with a low urgency degree while limiting the cost and optimizing patients' trajectories.

HUG@home is both an application for secured teleconsultations developed in the Geneva University Hospitals (HUG) in 2019 and an ATC on-call service for healthcare partners initially to support home nursing [2]. Between October 2020 and June 2021, Pharma24 and HUG conducted a pilot study on ATC with HUG@home in an outpatient pharmacy.

Methods

After pharmacist's evaluation and triage, ATC in a private room was proposed to patients consulting at Pharma24 for a semi-urgent medical problem. ATC took place between the patient assisted by the pharmacist and a senior resident of the Primary Care Division of the HUG.



Results.

39 consultations
27 videos
12 telephone

37 Median age
IQR 26-50

59% Women

87% of patients would have consulted a doctor for their problem
61% in an ED* 26% with their PCP*

41% Consultations concerned ORL, ophthalmology and dermatology

94% Of consultations ended with a prescription or recommendations

22.4 Mean consultation duration in minutes

6% Emergency care referrals

100 CHF Estimated saving of a single consultation compared to an emergency room visit

72% Prescription
22% Recommendations
6% Emergency care referral

Conclusion

A young population with semi-urgent medical problems can be managed in the pharmacy using ATC with a primary care doctor. With 171 pharmacies in the Geneva canton, this innovative project has a potential of extension to offer an alternative to an emergency room visit. Financial, technical and training aspects should be developed and optimized in the future.



Hôpitaux
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* ED : Emergency department
PCP : primary care provider

1. Uscher-Pines L, et al. The American journal of managed care. 2013;19(1):47-59.
2. Phan Thanh TC, et al. Rev Med Suisse. 2020 Sep 16;16(706):1714-1717.