

Evaluating virtual glaucoma clinic patient satisfaction

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Background/aims

Glaucoma is a leading cause of vision loss. Current estimates predict that the total number of patients diagnosed with glaucoma each year is increasing (1). Currently, ophthalmology services are under pressure to ensure patients are reviewed annually. With rising demands, the likelihood of further delays will have a detrimental impact on patient safety. Asynchronous virtual clinics may provide the solution to this issue by offering shorter consultation times and at a fraction of the costs of traditional face-to-face clinics (2). Most studies assessing the performance of virtual clinics are positive; although, concerns remain regarding patient's perceptions due to the loss of the patient-doctor interaction in a face-to-face clinic and how this may impact health promotion (3,4). This study was designed to examine satisfaction in those attending the glaucoma virtual clinics and traditional face-to-face clinics.

Methods

A survey of 105 patients with glaucoma, including 50 attending virtual clinics and 55 controls attending face-to-face clinics at the Princess Alexandra Eye Pavilion, Edinburgh, UK. Participants completed an adapted version of the Patient Satisfaction Questionnaire-18 and a glaucoma knowledge assessment using the National Eye Health Education Programme Eye-Q test (5). Demographic and clinical information including age and glaucoma severity, measured as mean deviation (MD) from standard automated perimetry in the better and worse eyes. Satisfaction scores were compared between the two groups, with the effect of potential confounders, such as age, disease severity and glaucoma knowledge, assessed using regression analysis.

Conclusion

Glaucoma patients perceive the standard of care provided by virtual clinics to be high and equivalent to the care provided in a traditional face-to-face clinic. Virtual clinic patients also demonstrated a similar understanding of their disease compared to those attending face-to-face clinics. This evaluation highlights that patients are happy with the transition to a virtual clinic format for their glaucoma treatment.

References

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Results

- No statistical difference was found in patient satisfaction between the two clinics, with virtual clinics scoring 1.93 ± 0.43 and the traditional clinic 1.86 ± 0.50 ($P = 0.419$) (figure 1). A lower score denoted a higher satisfaction with scores ranging from 1 to 5.
- Most virtual clinic patients (65%) preferred the virtual clinic to the traditional style.
- Worse MD in the better eye was also associated with higher satisfaction scores (0.019 (95% CI, 0.007 to 0.032)).
- There was no statistical difference in glaucoma knowledge between the groups ($P = 0.686$) (figure 2).

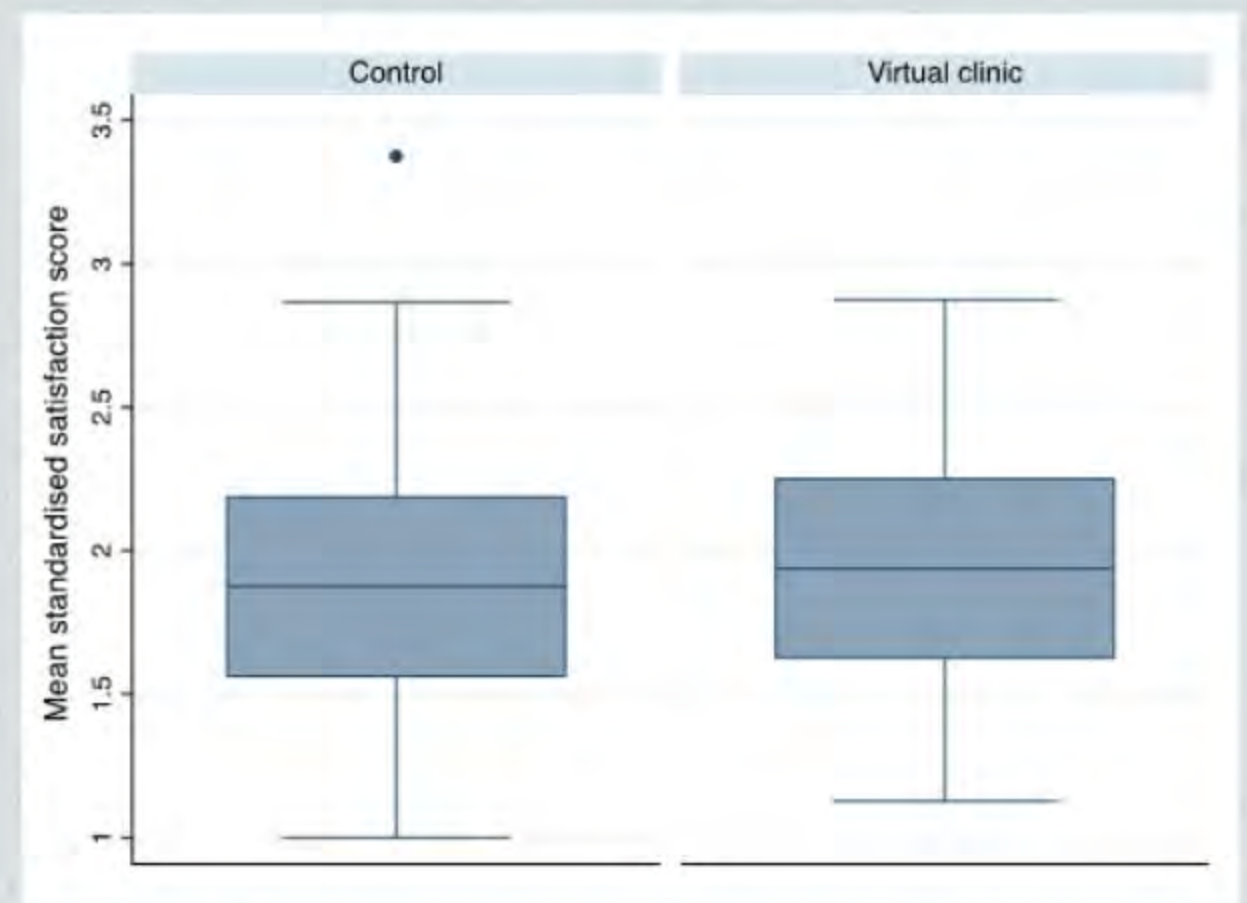


Figure 1. Boxplot summarising the total satisfaction scores among patients attending the virtual clinic and controls.

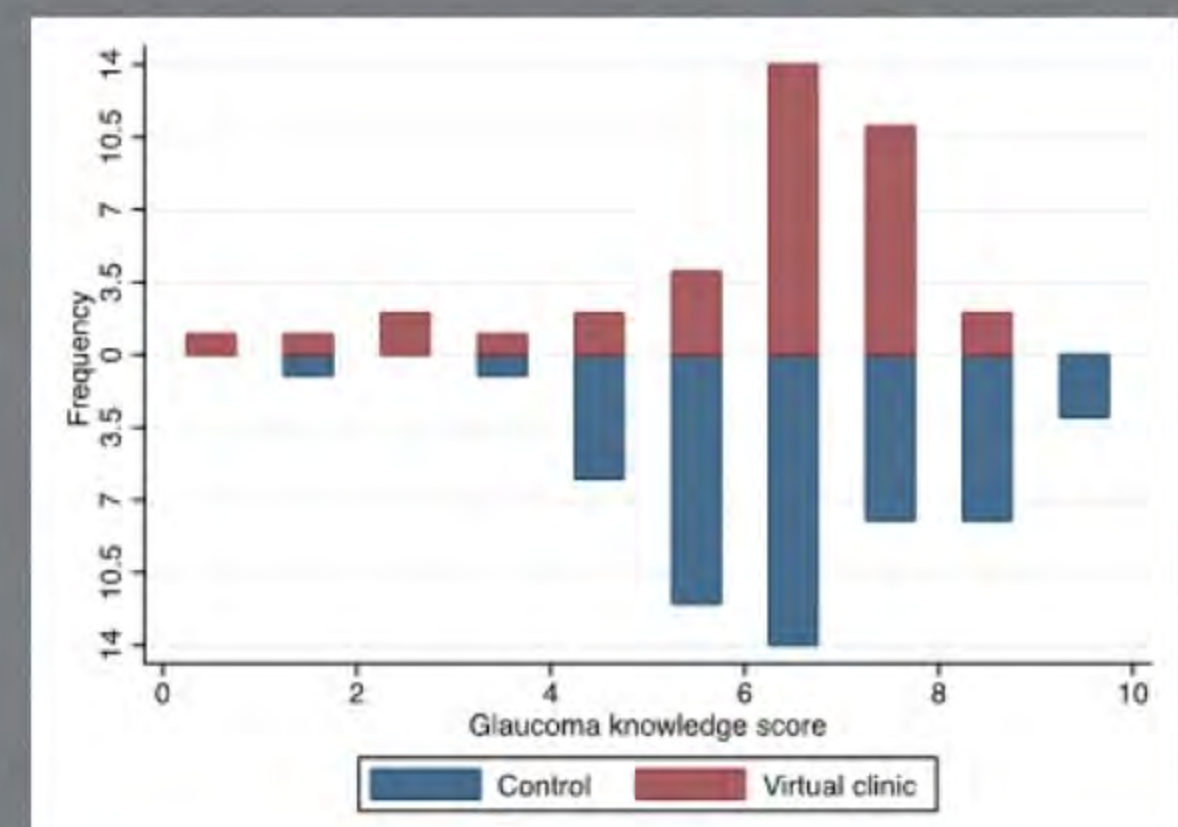


Figure 2. Performance on the glaucoma knowledge questionnaire for patients attending the virtual clinic compared to controls.