

Press release

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Are shared medical appointments the key to solving global healthcare shortages?

New research from ESMT Berlin shows that shared medical appointments improve patient satisfaction, learning, and medication compliance, without compromising follow-up rates or clinical outcomes.

This research was conducted by Nazlı Sönmez, ESMT Berlin; Kavitha Srinivasan and Rengaraj Venkatesh, Aravind Eye Hospital (India); Ryan W. Buell, Harvard Business School; and Kamalini Ramdas, London Business School. The researchers wanted to understand the impact of shared medical appointments on patient experience (knowledge gained and satisfaction) and behavior (follow-up rates and medication compliance rates).

In shared medical appointments (SMAs), patients with the same medical condition meet with the physician in a group, with each patient receiving attention in turn. The physician shares information customized to a patient's specific needs as well as standardized information relevant to other patients with the same condition.

SMAs have been touted as a potentially effective way to meet healthcare demand worldwide, especially in countries facing significant strain on their healthcare systems. However, the limited adoption of SMAs in the healthcare sector can be attributed to patient concerns regarding loss of privacy, which may impede open discussion of sensitive medical issues and dampen learning, satisfaction, and engagement. This new research shows that SMAs significantly improved patient satisfaction, learning, and medication compliance, with no compromise of patient follow-up rates or measured clinical outcomes.

The researchers conducted a large-scale randomized controlled trial at the Aravind Eye Hospital in India. India has almost a fifth of the world's population but spends only 1.1 percent of GDP on health and faces a dire shortage of healthcare capacity. One thousand patients with primary glaucoma were randomly assigned to either attend one-on-one appointments or SMAs with five total patients in four successive routine follow-up visits scheduled four months apart.

At the end of each appointment, patients were surveyed to assess their satisfaction with the appointment, their knowledge about glaucoma, and their intention to return for a follow-up appointment. Patients were also tracked for their medication compliance rates.

"The demand for healthcare worldwide is soaring and exceeds supply," says Sönmez. "In underdeveloped countries, especially, the patient-to-doctor ratio is staggering, and patients face high barriers to receiving care. We must use innovative solutions, like shared medical appointments, to meet this demand. Failure to do so would deprive a huge number of people of their fundamental human right to healthcare access."

According to the researchers, SMAs could expand access to public healthcare, lower costs for private care, and significantly improve medical outcomes for various conditions, particularly for Type 2 diabetes, in both primary and secondary care settings. The innovative utilization of SMAs could ensure that more patients receive access to healthcare faster, facilitating healthcare for all.

This research was published in the journal PLOS Global Public Health. The full research paper can be accessed via [this link](#).

About ESMT Berlin

ESMT Berlin is the highest ranked business school in Germany and top 10 in Europe. Founded by 25 leading global companies, ESMT offers master's, MBA, and PhD programs, as well as executive education on its campus in Berlin, in locations around the world, online, and in online blended format. Focusing on leadership, innovation, and analytics, its diverse faculty publishes outstanding research in top academic journals. Additionally, the international business school provides an interdisciplinary platform for discourse between politics, business, and academia. ESMT is a non-profit private institution of higher education, accredited by AACSB, AMBA, EQUIS, and FIBAA, and is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion across all its activities and communities. [esmt.berlin](https://www.esmt.berlin)

Press contact

Jennifer Reo
Press Spokesperson
jennifer.reo@esmt.org
+49 151 1457 1830