

Evaluation of the Implementation of Project ECHO in AD in Argentina.
An innovative strategy to reach underserved areas with uptodate knowledge.
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Background: Medical knowledge is in constant evolution, unfortunately these advances not always translate in a rapid benefit for patients. In countries such as Argentina, with a vast territory and a combination of urban, suburban and rural areas these disparities are even deeper. The project ECHO® is a model of distance medical education developed in US to support health professionals in the management of patients with complex diseases. This platform has demonstrated to improve doctors diagnostic and therapeutic skills and also avoid professional isolation. With the concept of moving the knowledge instead of the patients.

Since 2019, we are applying it to atopic dermatitis (AD) in Argentina.

The program consists of the periodic presentation of clinical cases by videoconference, virtual classes and a permanently available open chat between professionals in charge of patients with AD and a group of experts in this disease.

Methods: Argentinean dermatologists, dermatologist in training (residents and fellows) and other related specialists (pediatricians and allergists) were invited to participate in the **Project ECHO AD** Information about the project was provided: its objectives and reach, the use of the teleconference platform and the modality of presentation of clinical cases.

-90 minutes, virtual meetings were scheduled on a monthly basis

Every meeting 2-3 clinical cases were shared, discussion was then open to all participants, exchanging their clinical views and finally reaching to an agreement about how to proceed. Additionally there was a scheduled short update lecture regarding topics related to AD. (Pathophysiology, severity scores, emerging treatments, comorbidities, etc). A WhatsApp® Chat group was created in order to send queries that required quick resolution and could not wait until the next meeting or to share information related to the disease with an educational purpose (papers, etc)

After 12 meetings, participants answered an anonymous survey in order to evaluate the educational results of the project on their medical skills and the impact of the program on their daily practice

Results: Since November 2019 until november 2020, we held 12 meetings with 28 different cases presented in the sessions and 35 patients shared via the chat. A total of 217 participants from 20 of the 23 Argentinean provinces participated in the project. Dermatologists, Pediatric Dermatologist, Allergists, and GP`s were the main specialties of the participants. More than a half of the participants had less than 10 years as dermatologist (28.2% with less than 5 years and 23.7% between 6 and 10 years), 19.8% between 11 and 15 years, 10.7%between 16 and 20, 13% more than 20 years and a small percent were residents 4.6%

A survey was launched in order to evaluate the impact that the participants felt project ECHO had on their improvement of their medical skills regarding AD 72% believed that it greatly improved the understanding and general management of patients with AD, 93% that it had a positive impact on the understanding of pathophysiology, 78.6 % that improved their diagnostic capacity and 88.5% their knowledge of clinical severity scores. On the other hand, more than 85% of the professionals believed that ECHO DA contributed to improving their knowledge about the different topical drugs and possible application schemes and 71.5% their knowledge about phototherapy. Regarding the use of systemic treatments, 62.5% thought that it was a great improvement and 23.4% moderate improvement, but in reference to the use of dupilumab, 69.2% thought that the program contributed greatly to the management of this medication.

Conclusions:

After the first 12 months Participants of Project ECHO AD Argentina have shown a some degree of improvement in most of the areas evaluated.

Project ECHO AD is a transversal, educational tool that can help enhance medical skills of doctors and institutions, in which a climate of partnership comes first and look forward to learning from experiences, successes and mistakes of our own and other colleagues, to finally contribute to apply the best clinical practices to our patients.

