

# How India accessed healthcare in the last three months

Insights by **Practo**

The role of telemedicine in an evolving  
healthcare environment

Time period: **March 1<sup>st</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup> 2020**

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**Prof. Dr Sunil Raina**

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**Dr. Alexander Kuruvilla**

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# Foreword



## Prof. Dr Sunil Raina

National Convener,

Organized Medicine Academic Guild

COVID-19 has been stretching healthcare systems across the world to deal with the rising number of cases while trying to bring down the mortality rates. In the ensuing lockdown, State and Central governments, hospitals, healthcare facilities and digital healthcare platforms have embraced telemedicine as one of the main health and wellness strategies. This has certainly enabled our people to access quality healthcare remotely, either via call, video or chat. This move was further emphasized with the release of the Telemedicine Practice Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in collaboration with NITI Aayog and Board of Governors (BoG) and Medical Council of India.

These guidelines have legalized different modes of making healthcare more accessible by enabling certified medical practitioners and facilities to attend to their patients anytime, anywhere.

This report by a leading digital healthcare company is worth a read. It is heartening to see how India has adopted alternative ways of accessing healthcare via a digital platform for their healthcare needs. India has some of the best medical professionals in the world today and it is vital that we adapt to the need of the hour by deploying innovative methods to equip them well enough to reach out to people in the remotest locations of our country.

# Note from the CEO



## Shashank ND

Co-founder & CEO, Practo

### Finally, we will have a healthcare delivery system that can reach a billion+ Indians

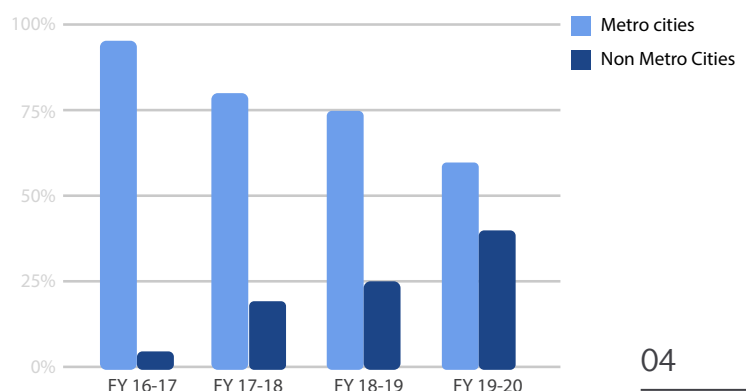
The sudden explosion of interest in Telemedicine makes it appear like the healthcare delivery has suddenly gone through a tectonic shift, but change doesn't happen overnight. It's a decade-long vision aimed towards democratising the country's access to doctors. It is now possible for us to ensure that every Indian has access to a doctor.

For long, Telemedicine remained a luxury and convenience for many. Today, it's a necessity. More so for the two-third of the country's population that resides in villages, walk many kilometers before they could consult someone with even a little knowledge of medicine - in most cases a quack. Imagine what having access to a doctor on the phone could do to this population.

Doctors, patients, authorities are all slowly accepting this new form of healthcare delivery, which has shown a lot of promise. Masses beyond metropolitan

areas are increasingly getting used to consulting specialists online. A reality that will take years of trust and infrastructure building to get down to the last mile, but, will prove to be one of the best investments in future proofing healthcare for a billion+ Indians.

However, as with any new technology, we should tread carefully, to avoid abuse and misuse. It's important to use one's best judgement when leveraging this channel for virtual care, and for that, it's important to adhere to protocols, guidelines and standards set by the authorities.



# Executive summary



## Dr. Alexander Kuruvilla

Chief Health Strategy Officer, Practo

The last three months have radically changed people's lifestyles, with everyone's daily routines facing a major setback. We've seen a massive increase in the number of consultations that have taken place via our telemedicine platform.

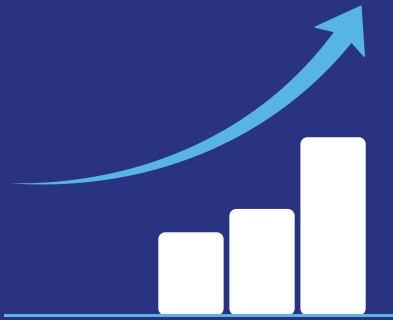
While millennials take the lead using telemedicine for their health-related queries, the last two months have encouraged people aged above 60 to use the platform as well to get their health-related queries answered by a certified medical practitioner rather than resorting to self-medication.

GP, Gynaecology and Dermatology remained the top three specialities accounting for 51% of the overall consultations. There has also been a significant rise in queries around other specialities including ENT, mental health, pediatrics, gastroenterology and ophthalmology.

While the usage of telemedicine is on a steady rise across metro cities, our demographic insights show that the awareness is rising in Tier-II and Tier-III cities including Hoshiarpur, Karnal, Bhimavaram, Katni, and Durgapur to name a few. This situation is different from the pre-COVID era where more than 70% of the consults were only from metros.

As we prepare to step into the "new normal" where cities are now easing restrictions and citizens are preparing to step back into a different world, healthcare is going to be seen through a different lens. How we deliver accessible, affordable and convenient healthcare to the remotest parts of India is the next big focus. Telemedicine along with other healthcare technologies like online appointment booking, to avoid crowding, will play a huge role going forward.

# India is consulting doctors online



# 500%

Growth in online consultations



# 5 Crore

Indians accessed healthcare online



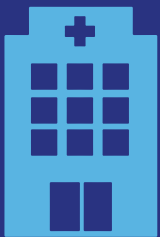
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Online doctor consultations  
per month, per user (avg)



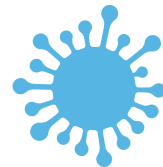
# 80%

Of all users were first-time  
telemedicine users



# 67%

Drop in in-person visits



# 7.5%

Consultations were for  
COVID-19 related symptoms



# 44%

Of users from non-metro cities



# 8mins

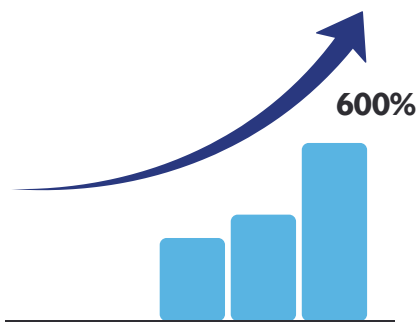
Average time spent with a doctor online



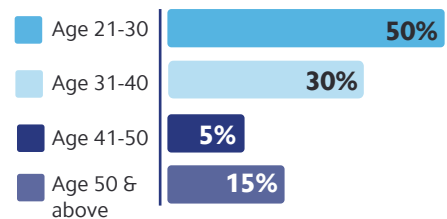
## Tele ENT: Seasonal Allergies Confused with COVID-19

“We saw an inflated number of queries coming from people of all age groups during the lockdown for Sinusitis as people became hyper vigilant of sore throats and nasal congestions. Most of the minor conditions can be treated based on a good clinical examination and assessment through teleconsultation. For those that require endoscopy or procedures, teleconsultation helps with initial examination and triaging.”

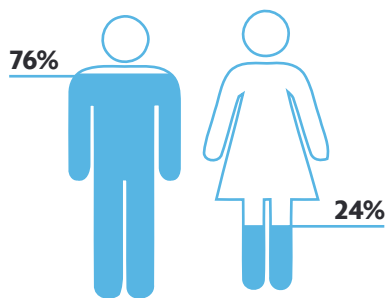
**Dr Jagdish Chaturvedi**, Founder of HiiiH international and consultant, Fortis hospital, Bangalore



Growth in overall ENT teleconsultations



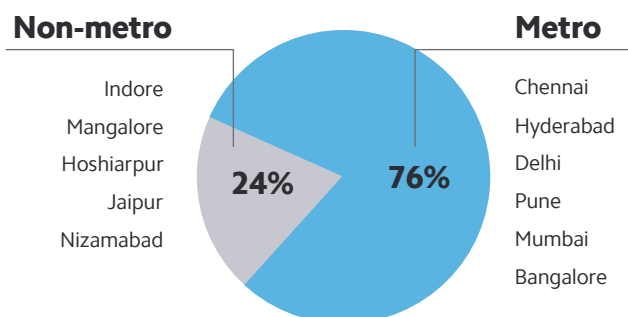
Age-wise split



Gender-wise split



Top discussed queries



Non-metro vs metro cities

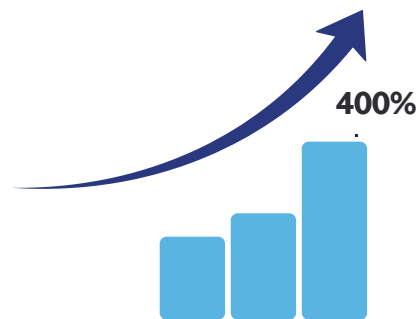




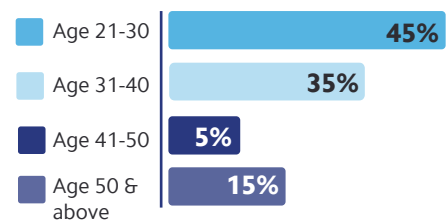
# Tele Orthopedics: Bad Work Postures Result in Back Pain Among Youngsters

“Back pain is a problem that people from all age groups suffer from, but is largely prevalent in people aged 50 and above. After work from home, a lot of youngsters have been consulting us online for lower back pain problems. While it may seem like a generic problem, it is always better to take a doctor’s advice in treating these issues as compared to self-medicating as wrong medicines or even exercises may worsen the condition.”

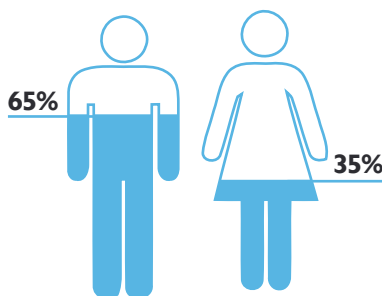
**Dr. Chandrashekar**, Senior Consultant and Head of Orthopedics,  
Sakra World Hospital, Bangalore



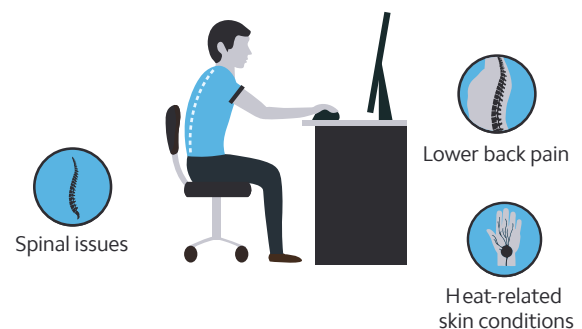
Growth in overall Orthopedics teleconsultations



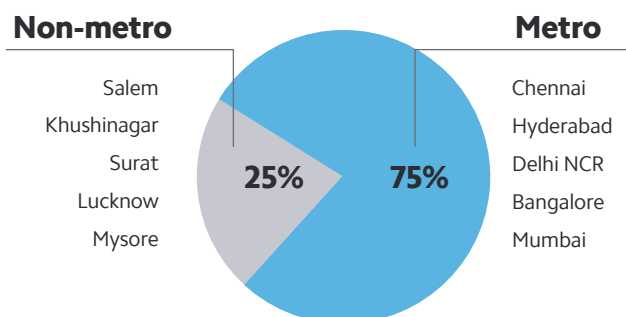
Age-wise split



Gender-wise split



Top discussed queries



Non-metro vs metro cities

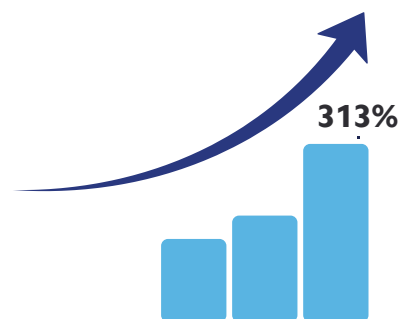




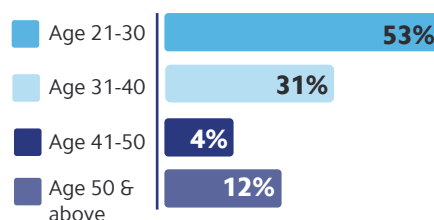
## Tele Gastroenterology: Sedentary Lifestyle Causes Digestion Problems

“Lockdown has caused a lot of changes in the way we work and eat. Working from home for longer hours has become very common. Eating has become erratic. Stress levels are gone higher due to multiple factors of economic and job uncertainties and the fear of contracting COVID. This has led to an increase in digestive disorders like IBS. I have been consulting a lot of patients via teleconsult for the last three months on these issues. Teleconsultation is one of the best alternatives for in-clinic consultations, especially during times like these.”

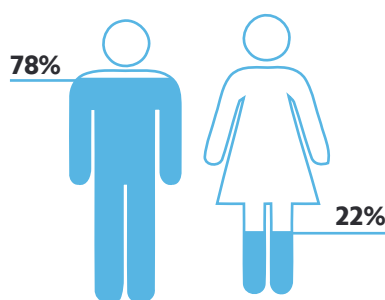
**Dr. Lorance Peter**, HOD and chief of Gastroenterology at Columbia Asia Hospital, Bangalore



Growth in overall Gastroenterology teleconsultations



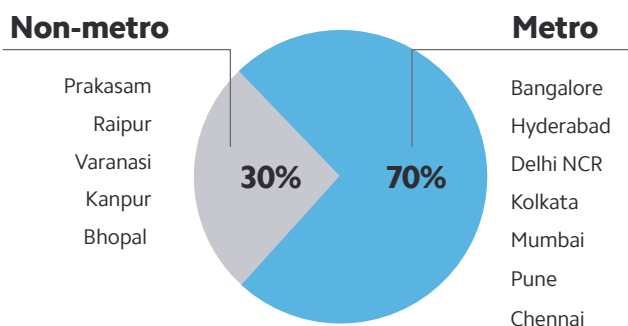
Age-wise split



Gender-wise split



Top discussed queries



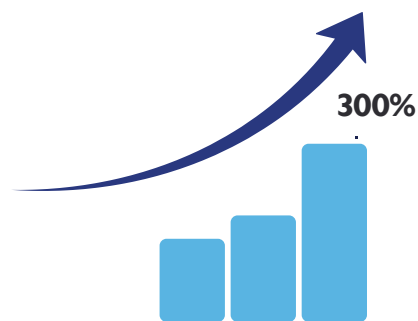
Non-metro vs metro cities



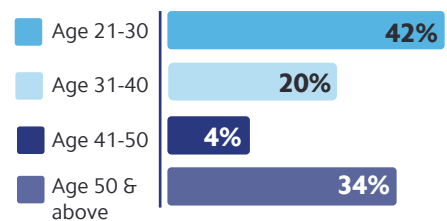
# Tele Dermatology: Stress Impacts Skin Health

“Stress is not only taking a toll on Indians’ mental and physical well being, but also adversely affecting their skin, hair, nails and causing other related issues. Furthermore, dermatological issues increase significantly during summer; these are excluding the existing patient list who are being treated for long-term dermatological problems that need regular check-ups. As a speciality that is highly dependent on visual consultation, telemedicine has certainly been a boon.”

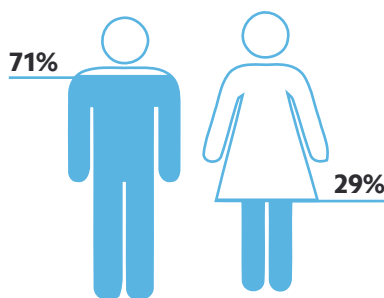
**Dr Rasya Dixit**, Dermatologist, Dr. Dixit Cosmetic Dermatology Clinic, Bangalore



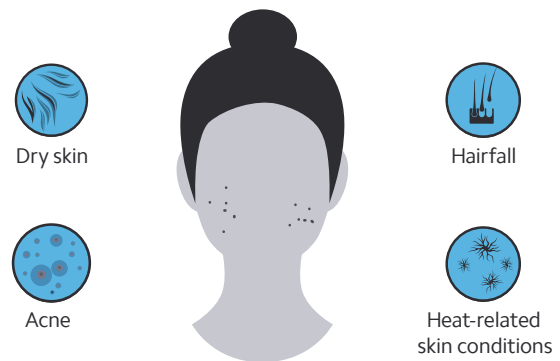
Growth in overall Dermatology teleconsultation



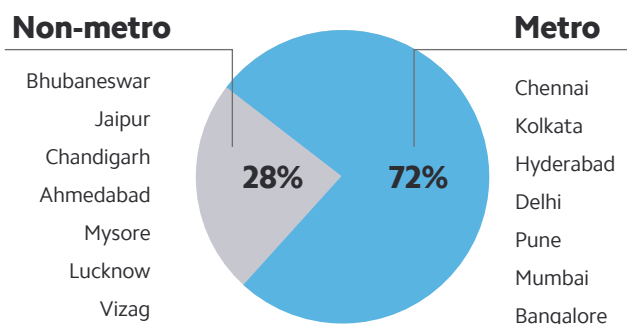
Age-wise split



Gender-wise split



Top discussed queries



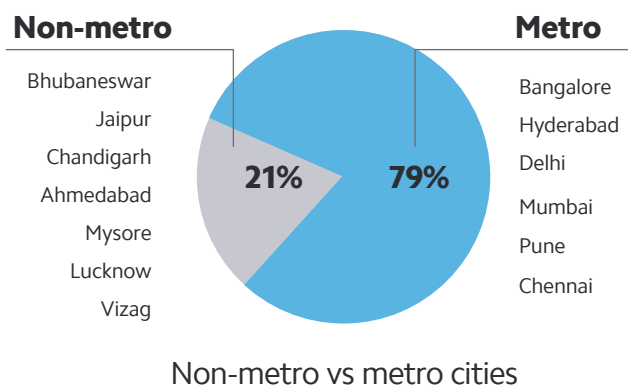
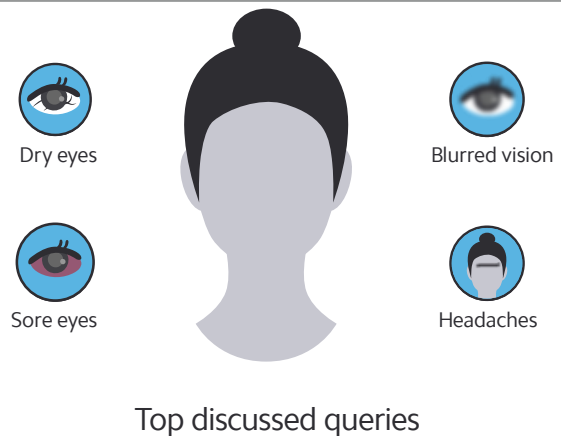
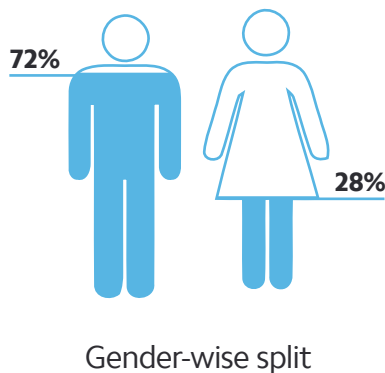
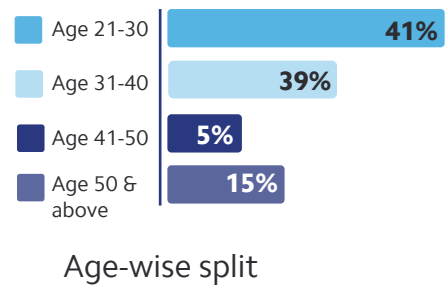
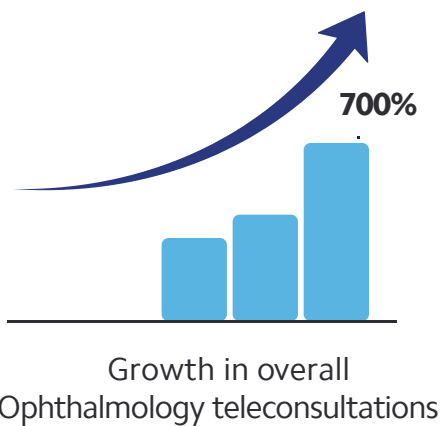
Non-metro vs metro cities



# Tele Ophthalmology: Increased Screen-time Affects Eye Health

“Being confined inside four walls has led to an increase in screen-time across age groups; be it the television, phones or laptops. Most queries were on dry eyes and related discomfort which is a result of irregular sleep patterns as well. In other words, insomnia at varying degrees has been an issue with some of the patients, which might be due to an increase in screen time.”

**Dr. Vishal Grover**, Ophthalmologist and Proprietor, Netrayatan Hospital, New Delhi

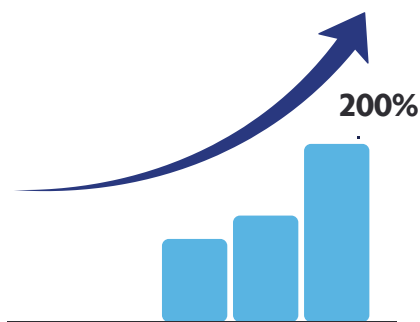




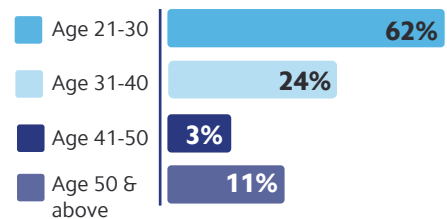
# Tele Psychiatry: Work & Health-related Pressure Impacts Mental Health

“In the midst of a global pandemic crisis, youngsters are grappling with work related stress and general anxiety rising from isolation and loneliness, often leading to panic attacks. This gives rise to the immediate need to attend to these patients and this can be achieved via teleconsultation. With preliminary evaluation and consultation done remotely, mental health issues at an early stage can be addressed effectively.”

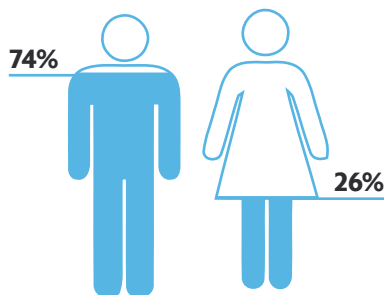
**Dr Venkatesh Babu G M**, Consultant Psychiatry at Fortis, Bangalore



Growth in overall Psychiatry teleconsultations



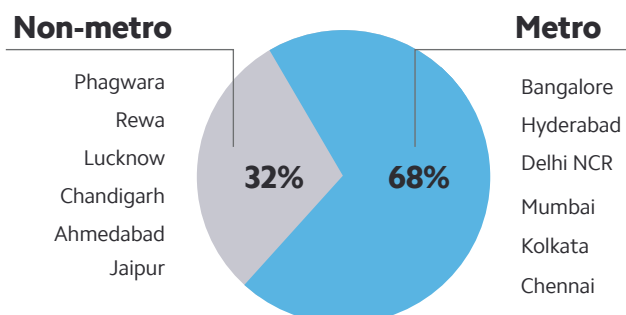
Age-wise split



Gender-wise split



Top discussed queries



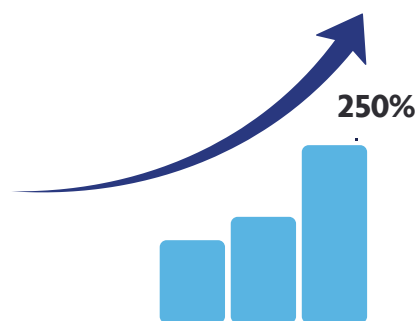
Non-metro vs metro cities



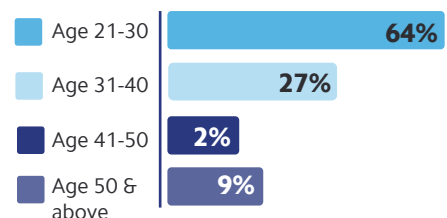
## Tele Gynaecology: Prenatal Visits Turn Virtual Amidst COVID-19 Fear

“We have been receiving a lot of queries from expectant mothers and young professionals from both metro and non-metro cities. Pregnancy related questions have increased as the regular check-ups got disrupted due to the lockdown. The increased stress has resulted in irregular menstrual cycles for many as well. Digital platforms provide a great opportunity for people, especially women, to seek medical assistance from specialized doctors.”

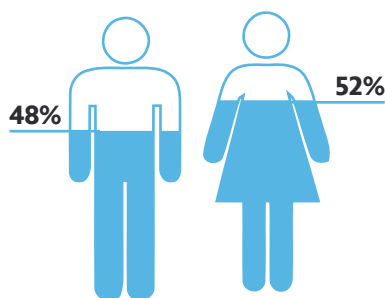
**Dr Vanita Vaishnav**, Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, Bangalore



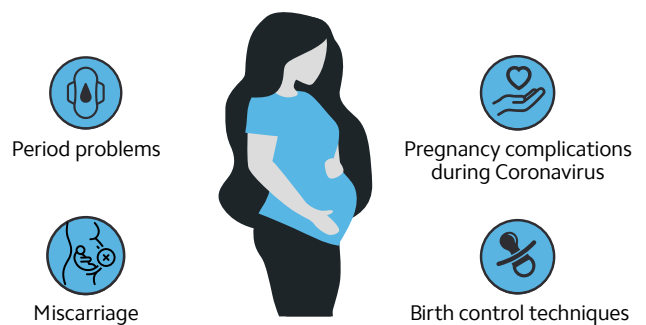
Growth in overall Gynaecology teleconsultations



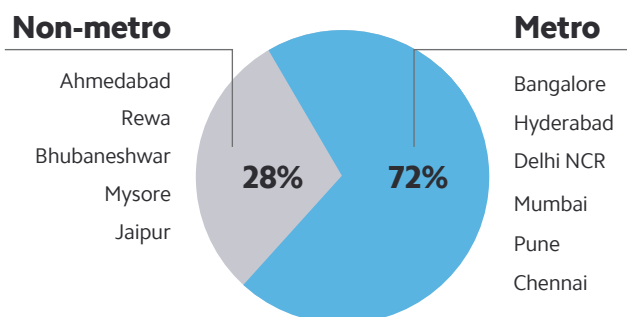
Age-wise split



Gender-wise split



Top discussed queries



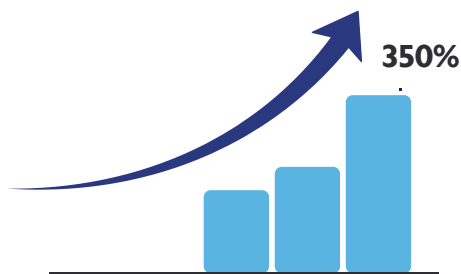
Non-metro vs metro cities



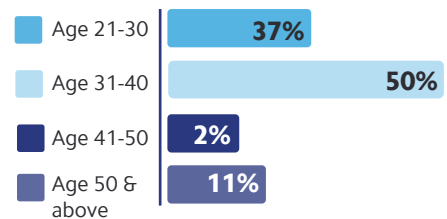
## Tele Pediatrics: Delay in Immunization Worries Parents of Newborns

“Telemedicine is a great way to respond to parents who have questions around issues like feeding, vaccinations, —issues that really matter to parents but, because of lockdown, may have had to wait to be addressed if not for telemedicine. If their children are due for vaccinations, they should as a first step consult a doctor online and check with them on the best possible ways to get it done on time. More importantly, it is vital that parents are well-informed in order to make the right decision for their infants.”

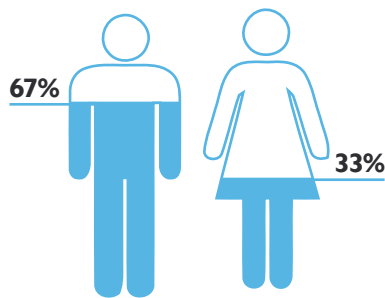
**Dr Prashanth S Urs**, HOD, Sr Consultant Neonatologist and Pediatrician,  
Department of Neonatology, Apollo Hospital, Bangalore



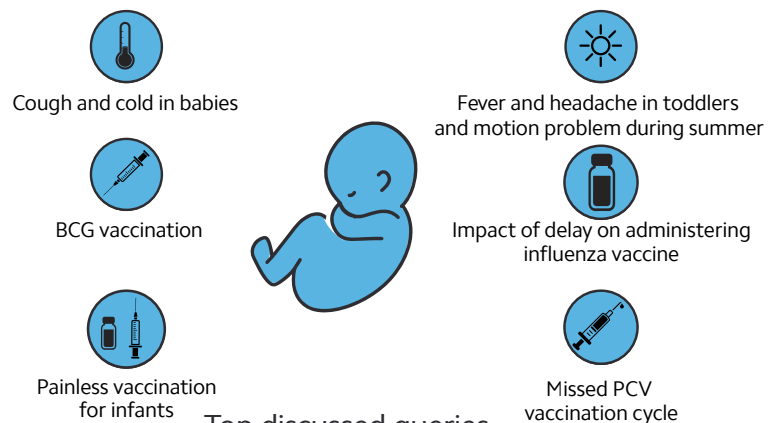
Growth in overall Pediatric teleconsultations



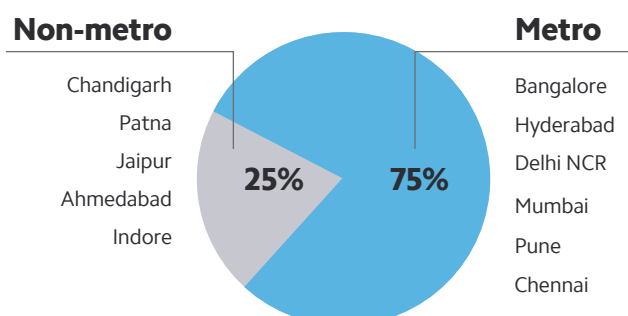
Age-wise split



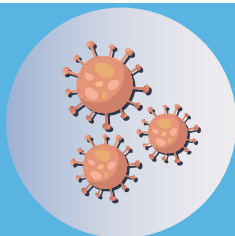
Gender-wise split



Top discussed queries



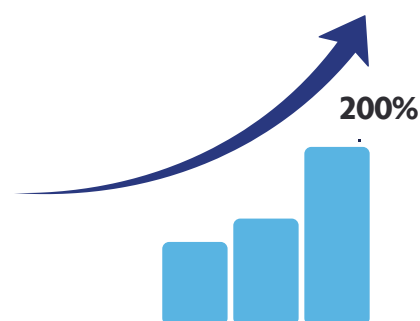
Non-metro vs metro cities



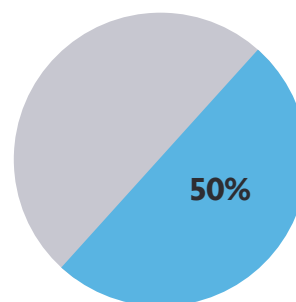
## COVID-19 Continues to be India's Topmost Concern

“Telehealth has multiple applications, optimal care and virtual care is possible and extremely helpful in a pandemic scenario like COVID-19. It uses high definition transmission and clarity to provide rapid, accurate and real time consultation from professionals with expertise. Healthcare professionals can evaluate, diagnose and treat in a seamless environment.. Patients are proactively using healthcare to manage their health and telehealth is a great alternative and has the potential to reach exponential levels.”

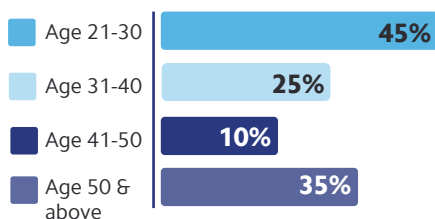
Dr C M A Belliappa, General Physician, Bangalore



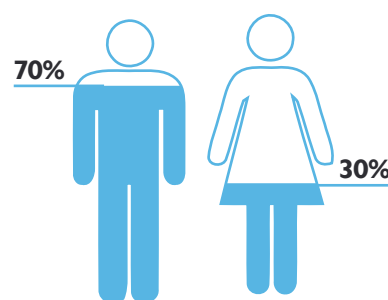
Growth in overall COVID-19 related teleconsultations



More than 50% of all GP eConsults were related to Coronavirus



Age-wise split



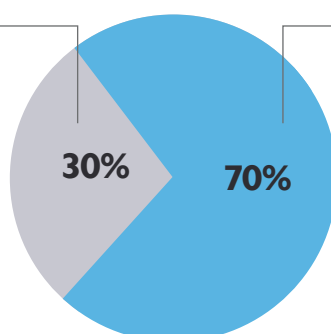
Gender-wise split

### Non-metro

Vijayawada  
Mathura  
Vellore  
Meerut  
Ludhiana  
Dehradun

### Metro

Delhi  
Bangalore  
Mumbai  
Hyderabad  
Pune  
Chennai



Non-metro vs metro cities



# About Practo

For millions of people, Practo is their trusted home, where they know they will find the healing touch. Practo is the place that connects them to everything that they need to take good care of themselves and their families, assessing health issues, finding the right doctor, managing records securely, and finding new ways to live a longer, healthier life. Healthcare providers and other doctor partners use Practo because it is the trusted home for health for millions of people. Practo provides a definitive platform for them to build their presence, to grow their practice or business, and to engage their patients in a way that was never possible before.

As technology becomes an integral part of healthcare, Practo has also become an essential enabler in helping doctors understand the nuances of managing and securely storing all health data. Practo encrypts all data with 256-bit encryption (many banks use just 128-bit), uses HIPAA compliant data centres, and is one of the few healthcare companies to be ISO 27001 certified. Today, Practo is present in 15 countries, helps 18 crore+ patients a year, and connects patients with 1 lakh+ verified healthcare providers.



## Ensuring user privacy

The Insights Report was developed to understand the healthcare patterns of Indians since the outbreak of COVID-19 while adhering to our stringent data security and privacy measures. These insights have been created with aggregated and anonymized sets of data from our users who share their age and location with us which is optional. A fundamental tenet of Practo is ensuring that the patients' health information is safe, secure and private. Considerable investments have been made to ensure that Practo remains one of the safest places for health information stored by the clinic and hospital partners as well as patients. Visit Practo's Privacy Policy to learn more about how we keep your data private, safe and secure.