**TELECARDIOLOGY AS A SCREENING TOOL IN THE GENERAL POPULATION: EKG IN PHARMACIES**

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Objectives: To assess the feasibility of telecardiology as a novel screening tool in the general population.

Background: Nowadays pharmacies in Italy are becoming health-centers, also providing tele-managed EKG recordings.

Methods: We prospectively evaluated the referral reasons, cardiovascular risk factors (RF) profile and clinical history of 891 consecutive patients from September 2009 to August 2011 who accessed one out of the 24 pharmacies participating in a tele-EKG initiative to record a remotely managed EKG. EKGs were recorded by a 12-lead, 10-wire tele-EKG device and transmitted trans-telephonically to our telemedicine center, where a remote cardiologist integrated EKG findings and clinical data, talking to the patient.

Results: We divided patients into 2 groups according to the access reason: Group A: asymptomatic control EKGs (89%); Group B: ongoing symptom (29% palpitations, 29% chest pain, 12% dyspnoea, 25% other).Median age was lower in Group A vs Group B (45.72 vs 51.88; p<0.05), whereas sex distribution was similar. In Group A 8.5% of pts reported a previous history of cardiovascular disease vs 26.3% in Group B.8% of Group A pts were referred to further medical assessment

(0.25% to ER; 5% to a cardiologist; 2.5% to a general practitioner) vs 39% of Group B pts (15% to ER; 14% to a cardiologist; 11% to the general practitioner).

Conclusions: Most of the patients accessed a tele-EKG facility as a check up tool and 8% were identified for subsequent evaluation. This integrated telecare delivery system may provide a low cost mean for screening an apparently healthy population.