

Use of interprofessional collaboration tools by primary care workers during the covid-19 pandemic.

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INTRODUCTION

The covid-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted all healthcare professionals. We sought to understand how it influenced the modalities and use of interprofessional collaboration tools within the first line of care in French-speaking Belgium.

METHOD

This research is based on a qualitative method data collection according to Grounded Theory. It was conducted amongst primary care professionals in Brussels and Hainaut.

Our data sources are:

- Detailed analysis of textual sources: Media, Facebook pages, professionals' forums, administrative documents, documentary sources from stakeholders and representatives of professionals.
- 80 interviews from 1st line professionals (private and public, alone or within organizations).
- Field observations within 4 structures.

RESULTS

The crisis has led to a major change in collaboration tools. We have observed a trend towards replacing non-digital tools (face-to-face multidisciplinary meetings, informal discussions, transmission notebooks, etc.) with digital tools (videoconferencing, instant messaging groups, electronic patient records, etc.). We observe that this is accompanied by significant effects: reduction of geographical constraints, wider and faster access to information, invasion of privacy, transmission to more participants resulting in less confidentiality, modification of the structuring of information, less security of information exchanges. The use of these tools is concomitant with a sharp reduction in informal exchanges between professionals.

DISCUSSION

It would be necessary to study the impacts of the observed changes on the quality of interprofessional collaboration within and between organizations, on relationships between professions, and on the satisfaction and quality of life of professionals.

KEY WORDS

methods of cooperation, digital communication, primary care