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## The Use Of Technology In Clinical Service Delivery During Natural Disasters. An Endoscopy Case Study At Vila Central Hospital, 2023.

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### **Abstract text**

**Background:** Health care workers rely heavily on face-to-face interactions with patients to make clinical decision. In Vanuatu, as in many low resource settings, patient information is stored in hard copy records. During times of disaster, patient information may be difficult to access and patient files may become damaged. A low-cost and low-tech solution is urgently needed to collect patient information. The objective of this project was to implement a low-cost and low-tech solution to efficiently provide specialist health services in Vanuatu.

**Methods:** A pre-planned visiting gastroenterology team was sent to Vanuatu by the New Zealand Medical Treatment Scheme. Patient enrollment via conventional referral channels was very low. In order to increase patient enrollment, the specialist team made a public request via Facebook to identify people with gastrointestinal symptoms. These people reached out on Facebook Messenger and were sent a link to an online questionnaire which was filled, and resultant information analyzed. Priority patients were subsequently invited for face to face clinic, were prepped for endoscopy and had endoscopy

**Results:** Between August 15 2023 and September 4 2023, 57 people responded via Facebook messenger and completed the online questionnaire. Patients were then prioritized for urgency of procedure and invited for face-to-face assessment. Pre-operative work up of these patients was conducted. Patients were given appointments to the operating theatre and a total of 38 endoscopies were performed.

**Discussion:** Low-tech and low cost technology such as smart phones & Facebook & Google can be utilized to recruit patients for a myriad of health purposes ( clinical, surveillance). During a disaster where patient information is inaccessible & there are frequently changing health needs (i.e: acute trauma, outbreaks, malnutrition), this technology can rapidly assist in the provision of service delivery.