

TELENURSE'S SKILLS

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Abstract: In recent years, nursing practice has experienced significant changes, one of the biggest challenges being telenursing – the way of providing care by nurses using telemedicine technology. Given the special circumstances of achieving this form of medical care, telenurses must have additional skills related to technology, communication, collaboration and clinical evaluation.

Cuvinte cheie: asistenta de telenursing, abilități

Rezumat: În ultimii ani, practica nursing a cunoscut schimbări importante, telenursingul – furnizarea de servicii medicale de către asistente prin intermediul tehnologiei telemedicinei – fiind una dintre cele mai mari provocări. Date fiind circumstanțele speciale de realizare a îngrijirilor medicale sub această formă, asistenta de telenursing trebuie să dețină abilități suplimentare legate de tehnologie, comunicare, colaborare și evaluare clinică.

Nurses are committed to professional nursing practice that promotes quality, family-centred care, and efficient and effective delivery of integrated services provided by the members of a multidisciplinary team.(1) Basically, nursing job involves participation both to diagnosis, treatment and patient management and health education, an essential aspect of medical practice.(2) Nursing has long prided itself on the values of compassion, personalized care and the ability to individualize care based on patient needs. In the last 50 years, nursing has been marked by tremendous changes and nowadays nurses work in a variety of settings - institutions, communities, independent businesses - and fulfil various roles that require different skills and knowledge.

Currently, a large number of nurses around the world are providing care via distance technologies and in future telemedicine will continue to expand the capacity of nurses to provide care to those with limited access to professional nurses.(3) Because the traditional laying of hands is no longer possible, telehealth nurses are forced to develop complementary, but different skills to use a broad range of technologies to support disease-management interventions for patients with chronic conditions and/or to assist physician in telemedicine encounters with their patients. Clearly, the question is: “What complementary skills and knowledge must nurses have to incorporate new medical and communication technologies in their practice?”(4) It is clear that individual nurse is attracted to different kinds of nursing. McPhail (5) pointed out that the reason why nurses are attracted to a particular field is a result of their individual personality type. Results showed a correlation between nurse’s level of educational preparation, number of years in practice, place of employment and personality type.

The qualities of a telehealth nurse can be grouped into 4 categories:

1. Interpersonal Communication Skills

The effectiveness of an interactive two-way form of communication between a patient and a nurse is influenced by many factors such as the ease of operation and installation,

picture/ voice quality. However, of equal importance is the nurse-patient interaction process. The nurse must introduce herself to the patient, she has to impose respect by outfit, stateliness and behaviour with no expectation to be treated with mutual condescending attitude (in fact, she faces with a suffering person, whose ways of interacting with other people, including health professionals, are influenced by his/her disease). Communication with patient must be according with his actual state, with his possibilities of understanding and associated with support elements in order to positively influence the evolution of the illness.

The way nurses present themselves on camera is extremely important and may indicate feelings of indifference, annoyance, impatience or, on the contrary, compassion, availability, empathy. The patient must feel that nurse “is there with him and his family”.(6) That is why an important component of the process of telenursing is the collaboration between nurse and patient family, who can provide additional information and a note of objectivity regarding the period of time when patient was not directly under monitoring.

It is the skill of maintain human quality in those relationships that will characterize the nursing profession in this rapidly advancing world of telenursing.(7) The American Nurses` Association has defined the required communication competencies of the telehealth nurses as follows: “establish a therapeutic relationship which create a sense of nursing presence beside the patient” and “assesses and adjust communication techniques to maximize the nurse-client relationship”.(8)

2. Collaboration Skills

Telemedicine may bridge gaps in the current health-care systems between homecare, community and tertiary care. However, this requires that nurses providing telehealth are knowledgeable about the different institutions, the providers to contact in case hand-on care is needed, but first and foremost they must be able to collaborate and feel comfortable working across disciplines and with different multidisciplinary teams. Telenurse located in a rural or remote location has an extremely

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important role in the interaction between doctors and patients at a distance.

Efficient collaboration with the physician who takes care to a patient who underwent recent surgery (i.e. cardiac intervention) is very important for an adequate oversight of its health status after hospitalization. Any significant change in vital signs (blood pressure, pulse, respiration) with clinical output or recorded by special telemonitoring devices should be immediately reported to the physician, who will decide whether the adjust of drug therapy is sufficient or patient must be hospitalized for further investigation and, eventually, modifying the therapeutic regimen.

3. Clinical Assessment Skills

Telehealth nurses must clearly have strong clinical assessment skills. They must be generalists with good basic skills and must be able to smell an emergency! Some employers require at least 3-5 years of experience in a variety of acute and/or community care settings before doing telenursing.(9) A nurse who has worked on such locations has the power to control their emotions and fear in critical situations and the ability to act promptly and efficiency when patient life may depend on the decision taken. Nurses practicing telehealth must be able to recognize if this way of practicing health care is appropriate or not to meet patients' need and be able to support patients and families after the camera goes off.

4. Technology-Related Skills

It was clear to all proponents that telehealth nurses must have a positive and open attitude to the use of technology in nursing practice. They must be knowledgeable about the technology they use in their practice and be able to troubleshoot certain technological issues. Everyone agreed that when a nurse is techno-savvy and properly trained, she will be able to teach and support the patients at home in using monitoring and/or interactive video device or the health-care provider at the remote site during a telemedicine encounter. Information is key to effective decision making an integral to quality of nursing practice.(10)

Advances in information and communication technologies have accelerated efforts to implement information systems, and there is a need for all telehealth nurses to integrate nursing informatics competencies in their practice. They must have strong computer and internet skills as many of the remote monitoring applications are web based.

In summary, nurses are a very important resource for health. They reach out to patients requiring continuum care that is uninterrupted by time, distance, and setting whether in hospitals, clinics, community settings, in patient's home or through use of telehealth. The skills and competencies needed as indicated above are vitally important in the telehealth visits - a way that will increasingly become a solution to delivery nursing and other health services.

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