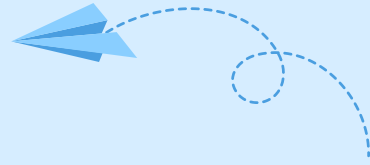




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# Telenursing: Is It in My Future?

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# | TELENURSING: IS IT IN MY FUTURE?

Today's dynamic advance of technology has altered the way of delivering and receiving public health services. Healthcare workers started to use telecommunication technologies to promote the delivery of health assistance to those living in remote regions and enable interaction with each other. For these purposes, healthcare professionals use telehealth nursing, also known as telenursing, which is a part of telehealthcare (McKnight, 2012). The term telehealth closely relates to telemedicine, which includes electronic exchange of information to improve the state of health (McKnight, 2012). It involves remote health services that sometimes have nothing to do with clinical ones.

Due to the development of technologies, the term telenursing captures a variety of services. It encompasses the usage of the Internet, computers, phones, digital evaluators, and remote monitors (Sarhant, 2009). Telenursing has a large number of benefits for those who reside in remote areas and lack transportation. Poor people and those who have a limited number of healthcare professionals in their communities and towns require this type of health assistance (George, et al., 2009). Unfortunately, poor ethical skills and lack of evidence of telehealth technology may result in the breakdown of communication between the nurse and the patient (Miesperä, 2013). This paper discusses advantages and disadvantages of this type of healthcare from the perspectives of the nurses and the patients.



# | Advantages of Telenursing

Telenursing is an acceptable approach for meeting the health care needs of patients. It has already become the best option for providing diverse, relatively cheap, preventable, and lifesaving health assistance to those who are in a desperate need of advice or medical aid. The benefits of telenursing are enormous.

Firstly, the healthcare professionals use this method when they cannot meet their patients in person due to the geographical distances. They can communicate by sending each other emails or faxes for transmitting medical data, such as X-ray slides or electrocardiograms (McKnight, 2012). Additionally, the doctors may keep all the medical files in a computerized database, and, if needed, attach them to the messages. It makes the communication and information transfer between the physicians, nurses, and patients easier and prompt. Moreover, due to technological progress and availability of satellite, phone or the Internet, the audio-visual communications are also possible (Sarhant, 2009).

Secondly, this method reduces travel time and expenses of patients. Sometimes people with complex health issues reside in geographically remote areas. They lack transportation or do not even have money for it. Thus, this method results in significant savings when calling a nurse rather than going thousands of miles to get an advice of medical specialist (George, et al., 2009). Due to telenursing, everyone can be finally equal when it comes to medical assistance. If people travel less, the traffic congestion and pollution will be less evident.

Thirdly, telenursing plays a vital role in home care cooperation and

partnership between nurses and professional doctors, who deal with acute health disorders. Sometimes they discharge patients earlier from the hospital because it is more affordable to treat them at home (Sarhant, 2009). However, the sick can still require additional professional help. Thus, the nurses can communicate with the patients or even their relatives and provide them with all the necessary consultations and expert help (Sarhant, 2009). This method will also improve the interpersonal relationship in the family. For instance, the child will spend more time with parents in a familiar environment, not in hospital, and will get better sooner.

Finally, telenursing provides an opportunity to consult the nurse or a doctor immediately without waiting in a lobby for endless hours. Patients can get any required information on managing their health conditions instantly (Sarhant, 2009). Thus, telenursing makes the medical assistance more acceptable and usable. It is one of the best well-known means of psychological and medical rehabilitation for patients, who experienced severe injuries.

## | Disadvantages of Telenursing

However, there are some drawbacks of using telenursing in healthcare. Firstly, there is a very limited amount of evidence about the costs and efficiency of application of this method (Sarhant, 2009). It requires licensing and credentialing of nurses. Moreover, people do not exactly know if this is a proper way of providing healthcare. The issue is if the nurses can provide full consultations and without causing any damage to the patient.

Secondly, there exists a real threat to the role of healthcare professionals. Honestly, if telenursing becomes widespread, the doctors will have less work (Sarhant, 2009). They will play much less important role in healthcare. Thirdly, it is vital to prevent telenursing becoming market-driven (Sarhant, 2009). It should always remain user-driven without any corruption issues.

Another serious obstacle related to telenursing is limited personal, face-to-face communication. It is impossible to perform the proper patient consultation without personal meeting and patient's lack of confidence in nurses (Sarhant, 2009).

Moreover, one of the biggest problems that this method of health assistance may face is the lack of technological skills. Some of nurses are not familiar with telenursing and before starting working, they require credentialing. They need to achieve competency and efficiency in telenursing system (Sarhant, 2009). There is almost no evidence according to the fact if people can fully rely on such therapeutic or diagnostic intervention. There are many cases when a person severely injured cannot stay out of hospital. Additionally, there can be many cultural and linguistic problems between patients and nurses.

One of the consequences of telenursing is a breakdown in the relationships between patients and healthcare professionals. The medical environment and healthcare consist of ethical principles and rules (Miesperä, 2013). It may happen due to the lack of interpersonal skills and ethical issues. For instance, if a nurse does not respect or a patient cannot perceive such aspects as autonomy, confidentiality, privacy, equality, consent, or beneficence, the breakdown will be inevitable (Miesperä,



2013).

For instance, people have always regarded confidentiality as a primary principle of medical ethics. It means that the nurse should preserve all the information about the patient confidential. This strict rule is still valid after the patient's death. Thus, the health professionals should protect it both technologically and personally (Miesperä, 2013). If the nurse violates at least one of the rules, the patient will not trust this method of healthcare. Consequently, there will be a breakthrough of communication between them, which may lead to serious outcomes.

## | Conclusion and Recommendations

In less than a decade, the rapid technological advancement has helped to create telenursing, the career of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Earlier, people could not even imagine that they would visit their doctors without leaving the house. Overall, telenursing may become a fully functioning method of healthcare assistance in future. Even though it has an enormous number of advantages, some its drawbacks are still evident.

Regardless of all the disadvantages of this type of healthcare, I would like to apply for the position of the telenurse. Clearly, the telephone conversations cannot fully replace the face-to-face consultations. However, if there is a special training for nurses provided, those people who live in remote areas, especially older ones, will benefit from this method of healthcare. It is evident that only those nurses, who follow the ethical rules, can apply for such positions. I enjoy working and communicating with people, especially those whom I can help. Thus, after



having examined all the concepts of telenursing, I can easily say that this job fully fits my career goals and life situation once I graduate from Chamberlain.

