Telehealth: Improving Clinical Outcomes and Reducing Costs

Philips Telehealth Solutions allows clinicians to make more timely care decisions and promotes healthy behaviors and self-care by patients, resulting in reduced risk of hospital readmissions and ER visits. Philips has had a long relationship with CAHSAH, to ensure CAHSAH’s members have access to innovative remote patient monitoring solutions.

Johanna Georgilas, BSN, RN, CCP and Sr. Mgt, Customer Training and Program Development answers our questions about telehealth.

Q: What is telehealth?
A: Telehealth is the use of telecommunication technologies to support remote patient monitoring and education. With services like Philips Telehealth Solutions, home care providers can remotely monitor patient vital signs and health status, while the patient stays home and the home care nurse stays in the office.

Q: How does it work?
A:
- Physicians prescribe telehealth and refer the patient to a home health agency (HHA) with a program.
- The HHA installs the telehealth equipment and trains the patient on proper use.
- The patient takes vital signs and answers personalized, clinician-directed surveys.
- Results are automatically sent to a website (via a land line or cellular signal)
- The HHA’s telemonitoring nurse monitors the patient daily and alerts the patient and care team when results fall outside predefined limits.
- Physicians receive trending reports from the HHA, or they can access patient information through a web portal.

Q: Which devices are used?
A: The following easy-to-use devices are available to customers of Philips Telehealth Solutions:
- Scale
- Steady scale (for frail or unbalanced patients)
- Blood pressure cuff
- Pulse oximeter
- Blood glucose meter
- Rhythm strip recorder
- ZOE® fluid monitor

Q: What are the clinical benefits?
A: Remote patient monitoring:
- Significantly reduces the risk of death and hospitalization
- Leads to better clinical outcomes and reduced long-term healthcare costs due to fewer hospitalizations
- Increases quality of life and patient satisfaction through daily monitoring
- Helps patients become more educated about self-care and healthy behaviors
- Helps improve patient compliance
Q: What are the operational benefits to my agency?
A: Telehealth enables care providers to:
   - Streamline clinical workflow
   - Catch early signs of decompensation and provide focused interventions
   - Receive actionable, clinical information to make better care-management decisions
   - Reduce the number of repeated hospital admissions and ER visits
   - Customize quizzes to facilitate patient education of their conditions
   - Establish patient-specific parameters for out-of-bound measurements
   - Stay more connected to patients and their care givers at home without added burden

Q: What are the financial benefits to my agency?
A: While telemonitoring is not universally reimbursed by CMS or private payors, telehealth programs can streamline clinical workflow, reduce the number of nursing visits, increase patient throughput, while improving clinical outcomes. This results in cost savings and increased referrals.

Q: What type of patients benefit most from telehealth?
A: Patients with:
   - Heart disease, COPD, diabetes, and/or hypertension
   - Complex medical problems
   - A history of frequent hospitalizations

Q: How do I implement a program?
A: Call Philips Telehealth Solutions at (866) 554-4776 or visit www.philips.com/telehealth. Philips will help determine what type of program is right for you.

2 Inglis SC, et al. Structured telephone support or telemonitoring programmes for patients with chronic heart failure (Review). The Cochrane Library.