

Teleconsultation – A New Care Delivery Model to Enhance Community and Primary Care in HKW Cluster

Cheng E, Choi A, Chan F, Yeung N, Chow SM, Ng T, Ng S
Hong Kong West Community Geriatric Assessment Service

Introduction:

The old persons are more vulnerable and more afflicted by chronic debilitating illnesses. They rely heavily on hospital clinics and the Accident and Emergency departments for health care support. The Community Geriatric Assessment Service (CGAS) is to provide health care service to support the frail elderly in the Residential Care Homes of the Elderly (RCHEs).

Purposes of Teleconsultation:

(1) to improve accessibility by elderly in need to receive community outreach medical services; (2) to save time and cost in transportation of both the elderly and health care professionals; (3) to provide telemedicine and telenursing by means of telecommunication technology in form of view station.

Methods:

Teleconsultation is a form of videoconferencing that serves as an adjunct to the existing outreach services. Telemedicine is the use of medical information exchanged from hospital to RCHEs via videoconferencing. Telenursing is to utilize videoconferencing to deliver nursing consultation to RCHE clients and carers. (1) telemedicine and telenursing between hospital and the RCHEs; (2) ensure timely and early intervention to prevent deterioration of health care problems; (3) save and allow more geriatrician's sessions available to cater for other CGAS.

Results:

Outcome measures were categorized as: (1) satisfaction survey; (2) manpower and time savings; (3) improving the cost effectiveness. Telemedicine clinics from January 2003 to December 2004, a total of 408 clients in 67 clinic sessions were served and provided. A saving of 67 hours in travelling time with 50% of A&E attendance rate was reduced.

Telenursing clinics from May 2002 to December 2002, a total of 58 clients in 19 clinic sessions were served and provided. A saving of 19 hours in travelling time with 90% of the referred nursing care problems were managed or resolved via the teleconsultation, and over 90% of the client satisfactory survey were positive.

Conclusion:

Teleconsultation could provide timely and effective intervention to residents of RCHEs; savings of manpower and traveling time to hospital; and positive feedback from customers.