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Telehealth and collaborative care involving nurse practitioner, occupational therapy, and physical therapy: Considerations for optimal patient care

Ken Randall

University of Oklahoma, USA

Telehealth can be a paradoxical technology in care for patients: Even as it diminishes geographic barriers and improves health outcomes by extending care to people in remote locations, it may be creating other barriers, particularly interpersonal ones. In education, teaching nurse practitioner, occupational therapy students and physical therapy students about team-based care using telehealth can lead to positive outcomes for these future practitioners and their patients. Nurse practitioner and rehabilitation students at two campuses of a Midwestern university in the United States engaged in a three-part interprofessional curriculum to deliver team-based care using telehealth technology. The curriculum consisted of: 1) On-line learning modules about interprofessional care and telehealth; 2) Applying knowledge using telehealth with standardized patients in simulated clinical environments; and 3) Clinical application with true-to-life patients using telehealth. We used a pre-/post-test repeated measures design to gauge student knowledge and attitudes regarding telehealth and interprofessional teams. Students demonstrated enhanced knowledge of telehealth and showed that they could use it to effectively treat patients as an interprofessional team. An intriguing finding was that students rated the telehealth experience lower after the patient encounters. Qualitative data from student reflections linked this with the perception that telehealth creates a barrier to developing patient and team rapport, one that can be overcome, but which they perceive does exist. Optimal interprofessional teamwork using telehealth technology can be an effective tool to achieve positive patient outcomes, however, awareness of potential barriers created by the technology requires thoughtful deliberation and development of strategies to overcome them.

Biography

Ken Randall, PT, PhD, MHR is Associate Dean in the University of Oklahoma's College of Allied Health and is an Associate Professor in its Department of Rehabilitation Sciences. He has been in physical therapy practice for 28 years, and has taught in the academic environment for 23, 18 of which have involved interprofessional education using distance education technology. He has presented extensively in the United States and internationally, and he has numerous publications on topics ranging from academic integrity to fostering diversity to developing novel educational strategies to foster student success in the practice environment.

ken-randall@ouhsc.edu

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