

TELEHEALTH NURSING FACT SHEET

ATA Telehealth Nursing Special Interest Group

The first published Telenursing article was by Mary Quinn, RN in 1974. She described working in a Boston Hospital Telemedicine Center and seeing patients remotely who were at Logan Airport.

What is Telehealth Nursing?

Telehealth nursing is an integral part of connected health, where devices, services, or interventions are designed around specific needs, health-related data are shared remotely, and care is delivered efficiently and proactively. Any nurse who has spoken with individuals and/or cohorts over the telephone has practiced a simple form of telehealth nursing. It is not a new role, although advances in technology allow nurses to see, monitor, and/or care for persons remotely. The terms telenursing, telehealth nursing, and nursing telepractice are interchangeable. Telehealth is not a specialty area in nursing, rather it is a delivery method to enhance health outcomes. Nurses in all settings who employ telecommunications and health technologies, such as audio, video, or data transfer in their existing practice provide telehealth nursing care. Telehealth nurses are successfully caring remotely for persons everywhere.

Why Telehealth Nursing?

Telehealth nursing provides opportunities to enhance patient and provider satisfaction, reduce costs, and provide comparable or better outcomes. With the increased demand for nursing, telehealth provides opportunities to harness the knowledge and expertise of nurses. Telehealth nursing provides:

- Enhanced access to care options
- Chronic illness management
- Improved care coordination
- Reduced emergency department visits and hospital admissions
- Convenience/timeliness of care
- Greater opportunities to leverage nursing expertise and for nurses to practice within the scope of their license
- Reduced healthcare costs
- High levels of patient satisfaction

Telehealth Nursing practice areas include, but are not limited to:

- TeleICU/eICU
- Telerriage
- Telertrauma
- Telerstroke
- Telerpediatrics
- Telermental Health
- Telercardiology
- Telerhomecare
- Telerrehabilitation
- Forensic Telenursing

Where is Telehealth Nursing Practiced?

Some arenas in which telehealth nursing is practiced include the home, healthcare clinics, clinician's offices, community-based settings, schools, post-acute and long-term care settings, correctional facilities, hospitals, nursing call centers, workplace settings, and mobile units. Telephone triage, remote monitoring, telehealth consultation, and home care are the fastest growing applications. Telehealth systems allow monitoring of patient data and physiologic parameters, such as blood pressure, heart sounds, blood glucose, oxygen levels, respiratory peak flow, and weight measurements via a phone or Internet connection. Through interactive video systems, patients can contact on-call nurses and arrange a live video consultation to address problems and concerns. Examples include providing instructions for dressing changes, administering an insulin injection, or discussing increasing shortness of breath. Telehealth nursing is also used by call centers staffed by RN case managers, who conduct patient triage, education, and counseling, to regulate patient access/flow and decrease ER use. Telehealth nursing also can involve patient education, teleconsultations, conducting and communicating medical tests/results, facilitating discharges and transfers, conducting physical exams/assessments, and collaboration with healthcare providers in implementing treatment protocols and providing follow-up care.

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When is Telehealth Nursing Used?

Telehealth nursing is employed when there is a need to deliver nursing care remotely. It can improve efficiency and access to health care. A nurse can telepresent a patient to a remote clinician for further assessment, evaluation, and treatment for emergent and non-emergent consultations, routine pre- and post-care, as well as forensic abuse cases. Telehealth nurses are also creators, designers, developers, implementers, administrators, educators, and researchers of telehealth, mhealth, and ehealth services.

How does Telehealth Nursing Work?

Licensure

Telehealth nursing may require additional licensure for practice across state lines. In non-federal settings, telehealth nurses must have at a minimum a registered nurse (RN) license that complies with both state and federal regulations. In the US, registration with the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) allows RNs to practice across compact members' state lines subject to limitations of the practice acts in the state where the nurse is practicing. The new Expanded Nurse Licensure Compact is applicable to RNs and the APRN Compact will be applicable to Advanced Practice Registered Nurses, subject to relevant practice acts in the state where nurses are practicing.

Competencies

Nurses must meet standards of care for safe, quality, and competent practice for telehealth nursing by practicing within the ANA scope and standards of nursing practice. Specific standards related to specialty practice areas are applicable to telehealth, just as they are to in-person nursing care delivery.

Legal

Patient confidentiality and HIPAA requirements apply to telehealth nursing. Specific privacy policies and informed patient consent are required for telehealth encounters, just as they are for in-person care.

Future

As the US healthcare environment continues to evolve, the expanding role of telehealth nurses will continue to change. Leadership and collaboration among nurses is needed to outline the uses of ehealth/telehealth/mhealth technologies to provide nursing care in an interdisciplinary manner to patients, regardless of staffing, time, or geographic boundaries. Telenursing is a global effort.

More Sources of Information

- **Telenursing Special Interest Group – American Telemedicine Association**
<http://www.americantelemed.org/main/membership/ata-members/ata-sigs/telehealth-nursing-sig>
- **The National Council of State Boards of Nursing – Compacts**
<https://www.ncsbn.org/compacts.htm>
- **CTel – Robert J Waters Center for Telehealth and e-Health Law**
<http://ctel.org>
- **American Academy of Ambulatory Care Nursing – Telehealth Nursing Practice**
<https://www.aaacn.org/professional-development/telehealth-nursing-practice>
- **Center for Connected Health Policy (CCHP)**
<http://www.cchpca.org/about-cchp>
- **Health Resources & Services Administration (Telehealth Programs)**
<https://www.hrsa.gov/rural-health/telehealth/index.html>
- **Consortium of Telehealth Resource Centers**
<https://www.telehealthresourcecenter.org/>
- **The International Society for Telemedicine & eHealth**
<https://www.isfteh.org>
- **The International Council of Nurses – Telenursing Network**
www.icn.ch/telenursing_network.htm

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