

Telehealth: Scope and Standards of Practice Introduction

by Capella Healthcare



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about telehealth and telehealth nursing. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Defining Telehealth
2. Telehealth Nursing

1. Defining Telehealth

Telehealth is a growing trend that offers improved patient access to care, cost savings, and more engaged patients with better outcomes. Technological advances have allowed nurses to monitor patients remotely and interact with medical devices. The Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines telehealth as “the use of electronic information and telecommunications technologies to support and promote long-distance clinical healthcare, patient and professional health-related education, public health and health administration. Technologies include videoconferencing, the internet, store-and-forward imaging, streaming media, and terrestrial and wireless communications.”

Telehealth can tackle access and provider shortage issues by enabling long-distance healthcare with patients at one site and the providers at another site. Telehealth has many modalities such as:

- Remote monitoring of medical devices
- Wearable tracking devices
- Video monitoring (live and stored)
- Nursing call centers
- Telephone triage
- Use of computers, laptops, tablets, and smartphones to communicate between patient and provider



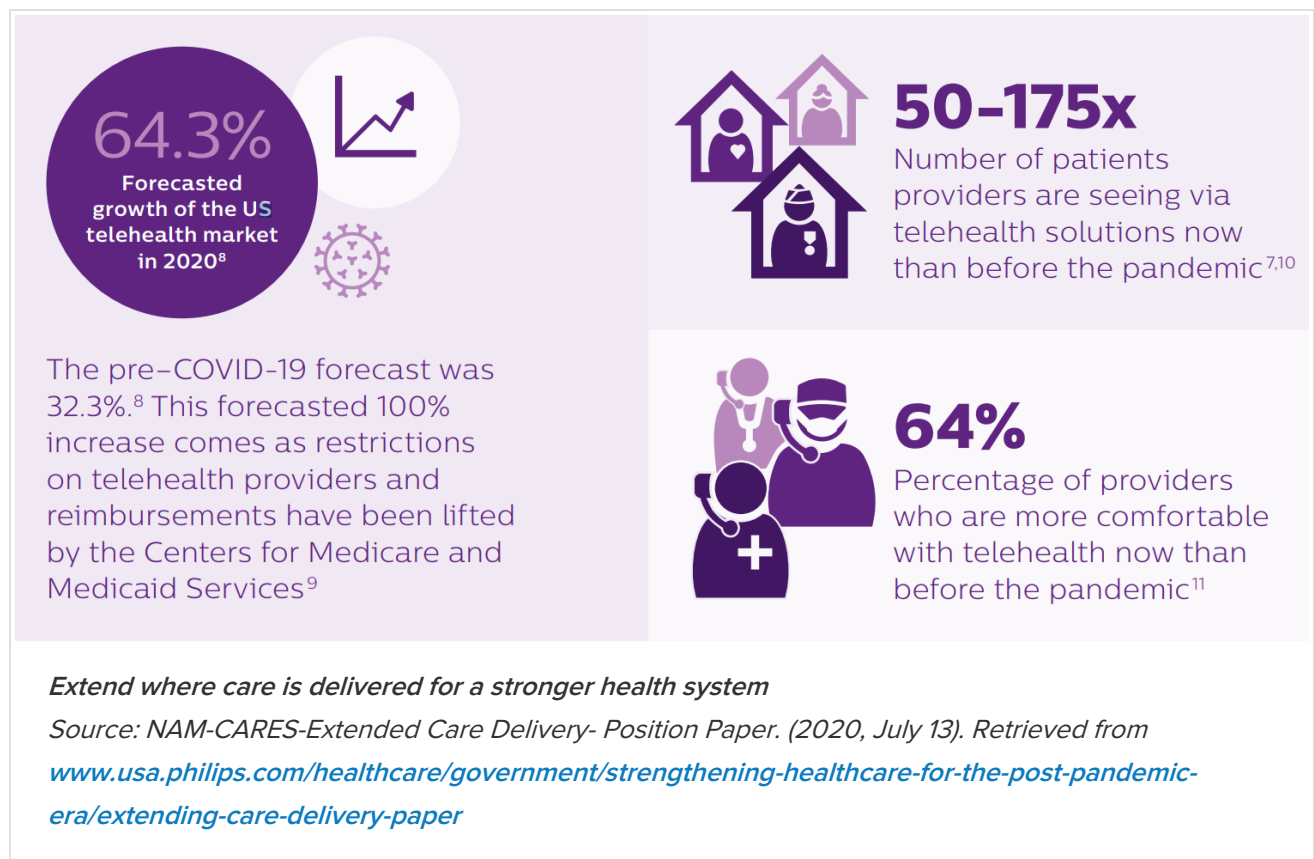
DID YOU KNOW

Approximately 10 million patients a year obtain telehealth services in the United States, including mental health services. According to the American Hospital Association, the number of hospitals implementing telemedicine increased from just 35% in 2010 to 75% in 2017.

2. Telehealth Nursing

Nurses are on the front lines of patient care and act as key drivers of healthcare change, including the use of telehealth technology. As medical technology becomes more sophisticated, the role of telehealth nursing continues to grow, providing new tools to improve patient outcomes and increase access to quality healthcare.

As the population ages, it puts increasing demands on the healthcare system, and nursing shortages making meeting those demands problematic. Furthermore, the trend has accelerated in the face of the pandemic. Incorporating telehealth services into nursing can help lower healthcare costs and improve outcomes by providing patients with timely access to nursing care.



As telehealth expands rapidly among users and providers, a growing number of specialties are offering virtual visits. Increasingly nurses are the ones to provide the care. Their use of telehealth was already flourishing prior to the pandemic in settings such as hospitals, clinics, call centers, schools, and post-acute and long-term facilities, according to the American Telemedicine Association (ATA).

In 2019, the Pennsylvania health system implemented about 1,900 video visits. As of April 2020, it had conducted 4,000 video visits and 9,000 phone visits. Some of these appointments are with doctors, but nurses are leading the charge in virtual care delivery, according to Kris O'Shea, a Well Span Health executive – especially in medicine management and working with patients who have a chronic disease. O'Shea went on to say that nurses are learning about their patients just by observing their surroundings. The nurses at Well Span Health also run the health system's behavioral health group therapy sessions via Zoom videoconferencing.

Lake Charles Memorial Health System in New Orleans credits the nurses for playing a crucial role in ramping up their telehealth visits in 2020. They are assisting in triaging cases to keep non-urgent cases at home to allow providers to focus on critical patients.

These are just a few examples of how nurses are impacting and expanding telehealth services to improve access, efficiency, and capacity. As the role of telehealth continues to grow, it is important to understand how telehealth technology can benefit patients, nurses, and the healthcare industry. This course will examine the role nurses can play in furthering the adoption of technologies that can improve access, affordability, and convenience while providing safe, reliable, and effective healthcare.

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Support

If you are struggling with a concept or terminology in the course, you may contact **TelehealthSupport@capella.edu** for assistance.

If you are having technical issues, please contact **learningcoach@sophia.org**.