PICOT question



Impact of Telehealth on the Mental Health of the Elderly

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Impact of Telehealth on the Mental Health of the Elderly

With changing times, there is an advancement in health-care services such that technology is leveraged to enhance service delivery. According to Mahoney (2020), the term telehealth describes the delivery of health care services that goes beyond the restrictions of the physical traditional health-care amenities by using telecommunication technologies. In telehealth, service delivery is facilitated by using remote technologies, which enable quick information sharing, remote diagnosis and treatment of ailment, and proper patient follow-up. Telehealth is increasingly gaining popularity and acceptance and continuously widening its scope of application across the globe (Chakrabarti, 2019). The recent COVID-19 pandemic led to an escalation of mental health disorders among people. Due to the restriction in movement, there was a need to enhance remote handling of mental health cases, especially among populations with trouble in navigation due to age or other limiting conditions (Dos Santos et al., 2020). Thus, there is a need to find out how telehealth compares to physical treatment of mental health illnesses among the elderly in rural communities. This paper aims to highlight the benefit of telehealth among the elderly with mental health illnesses and how it compares to traditional health-care delivery

Background

Mental wellness is a critical aspect of the general physical well-being of any individual. As an individual age, they are prone to special physical and mental health issues associated with aging, such as diminished cognitive capabilities and sensory problems (Banerjee, 2020). Depending on the surroundings an older adult stays in and the prevailing conditions, one is bound to experience a range of mental disorders, including but not limited to anxiety, loneliness, depression, and dementia. Statistics from the World Health Organization show that nearly 15% of grownups aged 60 years and above are patients with a mental disorder ("Mental health of older adults," 2022). Research done on elderly Dutch adults has shown that loneliness was prevalent among other mental disorders due to the confinements imposed with the advent of the covid-19 pandemic (Van Tilburg et al., 2020).

Significance of Telehealth and Mental Health among the Elderly

Due to aging and other prevailing factors surrounding the elderly, they are prone to both physical and mental problems associated with aging. Nonetheless, mental ailments make it difficult to manage physical illnesses among the elderly. Studies have revealed that the use of quarantine as a measure to curb the spread of COVID-19 increased mental disorders among the elderly since most were isolated from their loved ones and were constantly exposed to situations of fear and anxiety (Banerjee, 2020). Any form of mental unwell is closely associated with a decline in immunity; therefore, mental wellness is of great significance to health care. Contrary to the traditional methods of treatment, remote attendance to patients has the potential to increase access to health-care services and information whenever it is required. In addition, it eases the struggle of handling a large number of elderly patients physically, which can be strenuous (Kruse et al., 2020). Elderly patients, especially those residing in rural communities, have reduced mobility. In addition, the quarantine technique employed during the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated alternative treatment techniques to reach out to patients (Mahoney, 2020) effectively. Consequently, telehealth is critical in treating mental disorders among the elderly due to its ability to reach a wider population remotely.

PICOT question

In this synthesis paper, the clinical question revolves around the mental health issues of the elderly and the efficiency of telehealth in handling these issues: How does the use of telehealth compare to physical treatment of mental health illnesses among the elderly in rural communities? The population is composed of adults aged 65 and above who fall in the elderly category, reside in rural settings, and have been diagnosed with any form of mental health issues. The intervention measure is to leverage telehealth in addressing mental health issues among the elderly. In this case, telehealth attributes to any relevant telecommunication technologies for health care delivery as far as mental health care is concerned, such as video teleconferencing and internet-based remedies. The alternative comparative action entails traditional physical treatment of mental health among the elderly. The expected outcomes of the study are to establish the impact of the efficiency of telehealth in handling mental health issues among the chosen population consisting of both the benefits and barriers associated with the use of telehealth in addressing mental issues among the elderly (Harerimana et al., 2019). The primary study design for this synthesis paper is a systematic literature review involving the collection of available evidence on the chosen topic.

Conceptual Framework

Telehealth has rapidly grown and is persistently penetrating the health care system across the globe. Similar to other intervention strategies, telehealth has a number of key issues that have to be taken into consideration during its evaluation. One of the issues is the medical and cost-effectiveness of the proposed intervention measure. It is essential to assess critically how effectively the strategy delivers quality care at affordable rates (Grigsby et al., 1995). In addition, there is a need to understand how the intervention measure can be integrated into the existing healthcare system.



A three-stage method can be used to comprehensively evaluate a telehealth strategy, especially when the population or patient in question is classified as vulnerable. The foremost step is carrying out an evaluability valuation to establish the operational outline of the telehealth strategy in question. The next step is the formative assessment which evaluates the critical system design aspects. The last step is the summative valuation which focuses on the impact of the chosen telehealth strategy on health outcomes (Grigsby et al., 1995).

The effectiveness of a telehealth strategy to be adopted can be achieved using several techniques. First, it is vital to narrow down the valuation scope by thoroughly selecting and using a limited number of effectiveness indicators. In addition to scrutiny of effectiveness indicators, there is a need to assess the difficulties and risks associated with telehealth techniques and treatment of the disorder in question. Sensitivity levels have to be established to give guidelines on the flexibility of the heights of precision to be anticipated (Grigsby et al., 1995). Lastly, an assessment of the impact of telehealth on health outcomes necessitates the incorporation of appropriate techniques. The selected conceptual framework allows for a comprehensive evaluation of the implications of telehealth on vulnerable groups, which in this case is the elderly with mental illnesses residing in rural areas.

Conclusion

Administering health care services from a distance is an important emergent trend that is being widely adopted and accepted due to its flexibility. The elderly are a vulnerable group that may not be as mobile as the young generation and thus require technology to enhance the quality of care they receive. This paper has briefly highlighted the various aspects of telehealth beneficial in treating mental disorders among the elderly as opposed to the traditional method of caregiving.

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