

Integrating telemedicine and multidisciplinary care in geriatric healthcare: Addressing the urgent need for improved quality of life



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Abstract

Healthcare issues specific to the elderly population include restricted access to specialized care, dispersed services, and socioeconomic inequality. Incorporating telemedicine with multidisciplinary treatment in elderly healthcare is the novel solution put forth in this study. The varied needs of older persons can be addressed with comprehensive, patient-centered care by utilizing telemedicine and collaborative cooperation. Our study examines the advantages, difficulties, and best practices of this integrated strategy, emphasizing its potential to raise older people's quality of life, lower costs, and improve health outcomes.

Keywords: Telemedicine, telehealthcare, geriatric care, quality of life, patient-centered care, older patients

1. Introduction

Healthcare for the geriatric population is a special aspect of healthcare that advances as per their exclusive and individual physical, social and psychological needs (1). Thus, geriatric healthcare becomes increasingly relevant for aging populations in its ability to help promote healthy aging and combat chronic diseases, ultimately improving quality of life overall (2). Other problems, however include insufficient equipped doctors (3), as well as resources to specialized care (4) in geriatric healthcare. Thus, new ways are required in this direction. This research shows that telemedicine and multidisciplinary care are viable approaches for enhancing the older person's health, by providing greater access to healthcare services for them as well as enabling better communication between professionals involved in their treatment process while offering a plethora of individual-oriented services.

1.1. Telehealthcare and telemedicine

Telemedicine and Telehealthcare are processes conducted using digital technologies which enable medical treatments to be performed at a distance (5). Although the use of telehealthcare services is broader and also includes preventive and promotive measures, clinical care provision made in this way falls under "telemedicine" (6). This lowers prices, improves patient outcomes and access to healthcare (7). Telehealth services can be categorized into three main types: Synchronous, which includes real-time interactions like video calls; Asynchronous, which involves store-and-forward interactions like secure messaging; and Remote Monitoring, which enables continuous or intermittent monitoring of patients' vital signs and health status. Figure 1 illustrates the Categorization of Telehealth Services. The recent breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, IoT and the deployment of 5G networks are fundamentally transforming healthcare through telemedicine and telehealth care that support diagnosis, treatment plans as well remote consultations monitoring or education (8). This ingenious method has been changing the way healthcare can be delivered, especially for poor or remote populations.

Telemedicine and telehealthcare have gained attention for their potential to:

- Increased access
- Improved outcomes
- Reduced costs
- Empowering patients

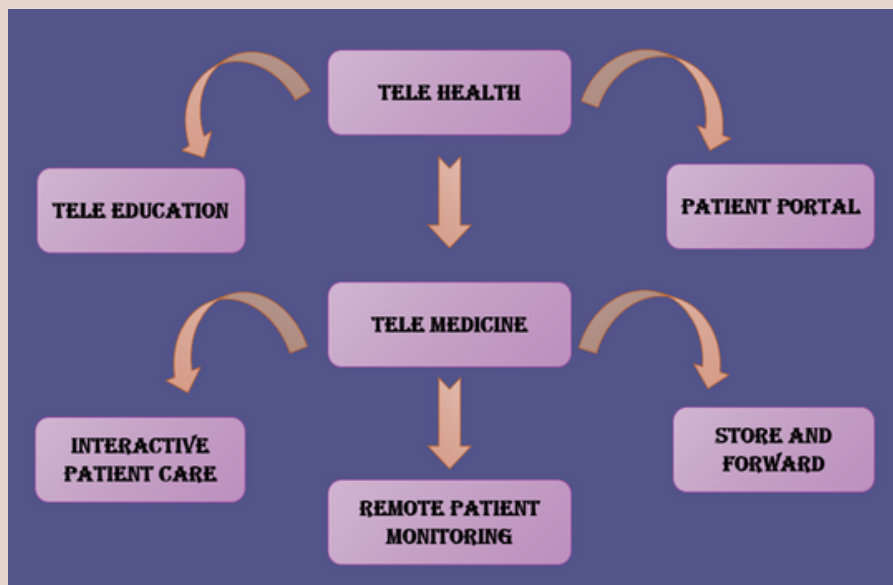


Figure 1. Stages of AD

2. Complexities and challenges in geriatric care

Aging patients demand more complexity and specialty of care that already overburdened healthcare systems struggle to provide (1). However, care should be contextually integrated and comprehensive since most elderly patients have multiple chronic diseases (in due to cognitive impairment) and often live in social isolation (3).

Geriatric needs include:

- Management of chronic diseases
- Fall prevention
- Function improvement or maintenance
- Mental health services promotion (4)

However, barriers to delivering geriatric care exist:

- Inadequate medical staff training (9)
- Gaps in post-acute and long-term services (8)
- Limited access to specialized resources.

These challenges can be resolved by telemedicine and multidisciplinary care. By delivering medical services remotely through digital technologies, telemedicine enhances patient outcomes and accessibility. Through the utilization of these strategies, healthcare systems can surmount the residual obstacles, such as restricted training and resource accessibility. Through virtual patient consultations utilizing clinical and medical techniques, telemedicine provides consistent and dependable access to healthcare services. In order to address the patient as a whole and guarantee prompt, high-quality care, multidisciplinary care teams collaborate. Healthcare systems can provide a wider range of needs for senior citizens by using telemedicine and interdisciplinary care (10).

3. Advantages of telemedicine in geriatric care

Telemedicine has several benefits in the field of elderly care. Telemedicine reduces barriers for the elderly population seeking specialist therapy, allowing them to obtain it from the comfort of their own homes (11). Figure 2 Depicts the Value of Telemedicine for Clinicians and Patients.

- **Telemedicine increased older patients' use of geriatric care:** A study found that a telehealth initiative provided elderly residents in rural areas with greater access to the knowledge.
- **Increased patient empowerment and engagement:** Telemedicine increased patient engagement and the ability to self-manage for older adults according to a global appraisal (12,13).
- **Cost-savings and travel burden:** Telemedicine eliminates the need for older adults to physically move in pursuit of healthcare, which could consequently help cut down on travel costs and improve safety (14).
- **Improved productivity and efficiency:** Telemedicine optimizes clinical procedures, contributing to reduced outpatient waiting periods and higher output. Telemedicine has been shown to decrease geriatric care wait times by 50% (15).

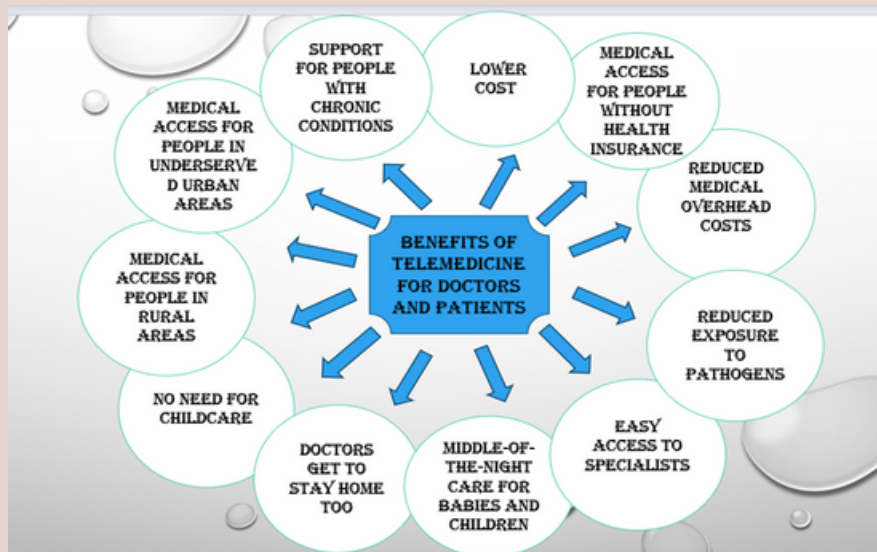


Figure 2. Value of telemedicine for clinicians and patients

4. Geriatric multidisciplinary care

An interdisciplinary care plan is a combination of different types of healthcare professionals who work together to take complete care and make sure the patient will get well fast. This approach acknowledges that geriatric patients have multifaceted needs therefore requiring a comprehensive outlook on their physical, social and mental health. Transdisciplinary teams are able to contrast, complement and transcend each other in the diagnosis support process along with multidimensional knowledge exchange between team members that leads to better diagnoses through collaboration.

5. Advantages of multidisciplinary care in geriatrics

A multifunctional strategy for elderly treatment improves patient outcomes, increases quality of life, and lowers medical costs (1). Medical practitioners use a cooperation paradigm for communicating information, harnessing their combined abilities, competencies, and experience to provide more accurate and coordinated patient care (16). Furthermore, a multidisciplinary approach aids in determining the cause and management of geriatric diseases such as polypharmacy, delirium, and falls (18).

6. Integrating telemedicine and multidisciplinary care

The use of telemedicine into a complete treatment plan appears to be an intriguing strategy with the expanding older population in health care. One of the models for integration are telemedicine-enabled multidisciplinary teams that combine best features from both worlds: managing with telemedicine but caring holistically as MDT (11). Alternatively, a "hub-and-spoke" model connects patients through telemedicine to specialist services located at an academic center (14). Health integration offers benefits of improved health outcomes, lower costs and higher patient satisfaction (15). One research uncovered that an interdisciplinary team of practitioners connected by telemedicine resulted as the most effective care model for elderly patients with long-term conditions. Multidisciplinary care and integrated telemedicine reduced the hospitalization & cost rates of older adults (17).

However, integration also has obstacles and constraints such as resource constraint for funding, human obstacle with manpower shortage or technological barrier (19). Technological challenges, e.g. connectivity issues were demonstrated to be barriers to using telemedicine in geriatric care (20). As an example, integrated telemedicine and multidisciplinary care model's scalability was constrained by the costs (21). Healthcare businesses may put money into telemedicine structure, teach clinical personnel and look at method innovation funding to overcome those limitations (22).

7. Case studies and examples

Many elderly healthcare contexts demonstrated success in providing telemedicine alongside a multidisciplinary approach. To demonstrate this let's take an example:

- Less use of antipsychotic medications in patients with prevalence-based conditions at the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) compared to matched private facilities and community care settings; · Geriatric Telemedicine Program: utilizing telehealth, this program has improved access to senior veteran health care needs by linking these veterans with a multidisciplinary virtual team without increasing hospitalizations (23).
- UCLA Geriatric Telemedicine Program (20): Integrates telehealth with comprehensive care for an older adult population of persons with chronic illness, significantly improving patient satisfaction and health outcomes.
- The Mayo Clinic's Telemedicine Program, which connects patients with multidisciplinary teams through telehealth has reduced costs while maintaining or increasing positive outcomes (17).

We learn these lessons from the case studies:

- The importance of leadership & teamwork among Health care team (19)
- Technological backing, infrastructure for telemedicine (14).
- The significance of PC care, telemedicine participation and interdisciplinary treatment with patients (15)

Best practice points to integrate telemedicine and multidisciplinary care in Geriatric.

- Articulation and definition of goals and objectives (22)
- Providing guidance and education to health care professionals (23).
- Assisting with coordination and communication between team members (21).

8. Overcoming obstacles and limitations

To overcome the obstacles and limits involved with merging telemedicine into multidisciplinary care, a number of solutions can be implemented:

Managing infrastructure needs and technological challenges:

- Allocating resources for strong telemedicine infrastructure and technical support (14).
- Ensures device compatibility and fast internet connection (19).

Ensure that Telemedicine Services are compensated and funded.

- Examining modern means of payment and instructions (15).
- Implementing regulations that encourage telemedicine access and attractive payment schedules (23).

Establishing interdisciplinary teams and encouraging cooperation.

- Deliver orientation and instruction to healthcare workers (22).
- Enhancing candid communication and collaboration between team members (21).

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, telemedicine integrated with multi-departmental treatment is a feasible way to improve elderly healthcare. By reducing costs and increasing the satisfaction of patients, this all-together paradigm will not only improve health outcomes in our country but also enhance the overall quality of life for elderly individuals. Considering the obstacles, outstanding management and infrastructure, in addition to novel funding approaches, may assist to achieve telemedicine integrated treatment. Furthermore, this model may lead to more geriatric healthcare experts nationwide in response to the deficit of such providers and improve access for patients with complex care needs resulting from health disparities. For this all-encompassing strategy to reach its full potential, both researchers need to further explore the benefits of it and legislators must respond with reimbursement standards that take into account these practices – but healthcare providers will still have significant bandwidth left for those who do commit. Ultimately, a collaborative effort is necessary to make telemedicine-integrated multidisciplinary care a cornerstone of elderly healthcare in our country. Academics should continue looking into the positive aspects and potential of this comprehensive strategy, legislators should push for reimbursement standards that support it, and healthcare providers should embrace it.

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