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Telehealth Primary Care Management Program in the African American Community: A Quality Improvement Project

Dr. Eunice Cromwell DNP, MSN, APRN, FNP-C
Purdue University Global – DNPs of Color
Indianapolis, IN

Background

- Lack of regular health check-ups among African Americans[1]
- African Americans only visit hospitals in case of emergencies
- Increase in chronic conditions among African American population. [1]
- Telehealth leveraged to improve adherence to regular check-ups among African Americans.
- Telehealth improves access to care and medication adherence and reduces wait times in primary care clinics.[2]

Purpose and Objectives

- To investigate whether implementation of telehealth would improve adherence to check-ups and follow-up appointments among African American patients in a primary care clinic.

Methods

- **Design:** Integrative review
- **Setting:** A primary care clinic in an African American community
- **Sample:** Ten (10) peer-reviewed journal articles
- **Databases:** CINAHL, PubMed, EMBASE, PsycInfo
- **Keywords:** Telehealth, quality improvement project, and telemedicine, access to care, non-adherence, check-ups, and follow-ups
- **Inclusion criteria**: Experimental and quasi-experimental studies, published in the last 5 years (2016-2021), published in English
- **Exclusion criteria**: Systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and other non-experimental studies, studies not published in English, studies older than 5 years.
- **Data analysis**: Narrative synthesis which involves organizing the findings into themes.

Results

Implementation Of Telehealth

- Telecommunication tools are used to implement telehealth.
- The tools include telephone calls, smartphone applications, and web-based applications. [3, 4,5]
- Different tools are at times used simultaneously to enhance the telehealth experience. [6]
- For example, telephone calls and smartphone applications could be used simultaneously to ensure patients receive adequate reminders about their appointments.

Impact Of Telehealth On Access To Care

- Telehealth improves access to care among different patient populations.
- Telehealth applications provide a gateway to for patients' active engagement in management of diseases; hence improving adherence. [5]
- Telehealth expands access to care, facilitates early initiation of care, and remote coordination of care. [4, 5]

Telehealth And Non-adherence To Care

- Telehealth aid in reducing non-adherence through use of reminders and alerts. [3]
- Telehealth applications used to educate patients on self-management leading to improved compliance with self-management practices.

Telehealth Among African American Patients

- Telehealth has been implemented among African American patients suffering from COPD, cardiovascular diseases, and kidney diseases.
- The patients reported improved access to care
- Telehealth also improved the patients' control owing to better understanding of their conditions.
- Use of telehealth supported lifestyle changes due to self-monitoring on aspects such as physical activity and dietary requirements. [6]

Conclusion:

- **Telehealth is implemented through different applications such as telephones calls, smartphone applications and text messages, and web-based applications.**
- **Telehealth applications can be effectively applied to improve access to care and improve adherence to follow-up and check-up appointments.**

Implications

- Primary care practitioners serving African American communities should leverage available telecommunications tool to implement telehealth interventions.
- The practitioners can use tools such as telephones calls, smartphone applications and text messages, and web-based applications.
- Nurses in different practice settings should continually embrace technology towards improving patient experiences and addressing gaps in care delivery.

Limitations

- Small sample size of 10 studies
- Study may have been affected by selection bias
- Limited generalizability

Dissemination of Findings

- Findings shared with primary care practitioners serving African American communities.

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Contact: Eunicecromwell@hotmail.com