MALT Mythbusters

Why is telehealth used?

MALT Message: The varying rationales for investing in remote care technologies can create uncertainty and divide opinion among frontline staff and other stakeholders. Having a shared rationale and clear goals for telehealth can increase adoption and reduce uncertainty.

Both clinicians and people with long-term conditions and those who support them, are end-users of telehealth. However, referring clinicians are not always aware of what the benefits should be, both for themselves and for their patients.

Understanding the range of goals that telehealth can help to achieve is an important step towards increasing adoption, which is achieved when the benefits of delivering care remotely are realised in practice.

MYTH: Telehealth was introduced to reduce the cost of care

Saving money can be a key goal for telehealth. However, there are other important goals that telehealth can help to achieve too.

Here are just a few...

To enhance clinical practice, through regular monitoring of symptoms at home

'Because I get the readings every day you can build up a good clear picture of what's normal for your patient so you can see the decline much quicker.'

To reduce the cost of care, for example through fewer hospital admissions

'The chances of keeping that patient at home and not going into hospital all the time was quite slim ... the telehealth for him helped and it did highlight when he had a chest infection.'

To improve service efficiency, by ensuring that patient contact is driven by need

'Because telehealth helps me recognise some of the symptoms, I might have a telephonic consultation rather than a visit if I know a patient is being monitored.'

To meet the needs of an increasing number of people with long-term conditions

'To increase someone's medication we would bring them back to our clinics 7-10 days after ... If we have telehealth to do this we can free up that clinic slot for someone else.'

To promote self-management, through patient education and monitoring

'It helps them to have confidence to manage their own condition and help them decide when they need to take anticipatory medication ... and being able to contact me or a GP for advice.'

To improve quality of life for patients, through increased reassurance and confidence
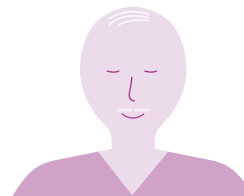
'It helps them understand how they are feeling ... if their pulse is fine and their oxygen saturations are good they actually get reassurance from that.'

The University Of Sheffield.