



Long-term Health Gets a Boost from Home Health Monitoring

Heather Harps

Director Portfolio & Account Management with the Patient Engagement team at TELUS Health

The results are in: home health monitoring (HHM) programs keep patients healthier.

And new program evaluation results show that home health monitoring programs also make a very big impact on health *well beyond the duration of the program.*

Home health monitoring has long-term impact

In programs across the country, patients with chronic conditions are enjoying healthy peace of mind at home. In this typically 3-month program, patients and their remote care teams track daily vitals and self evaluations, and connect when needed.

It makes sense that patients who are monitored stay healthier than those not monitored. If biometrics move out of a healthy range, clinicians can proactively engage with patients before symptoms worsen.

But new program evaluation results are proving that after the 3-month monitoring period is over and patients are on their own again, the benefits persist.

Program evaluation shows less use of care

British Columbia's Island Health studied five cohorts of heart failure and COPD patients over three, six and twelve months.

Over the six months that followed their release from the HHM program, Island Health patients showed the following results¹:

Patients with heart failure:

- Emergency visits down 82%
- Hospital admissions down 90%
- Hospital stays 98% shorter

Patients with COPD:

- Emergency visits down 37%
- Hospital admissions down 67%
- Hospital stays 54% shorter

Bottom line – both cohorts used less care and experienced better health.

HEALTHY AT HOME

Imagine you're living with a chronic condition. You manage it day by day, but when things go south, as they do, you wind up in hospital.

That's not ideal, but at least the nurses and doctors are there to care for you. Then you're discharged home, on your own again, and the cycle repeats.

But what if things were different? What if you could combine the assurance of clinician monitoring with the comfort of staying in your own home?

Now you can. That's home health monitoring.

"The results for COPD patients are less dramatic," says evaluation report author Michelle Wright of Island Health. "But they simply prove that HHM can in fact be very effective for COPD patients, which some clinicians had doubted."

Education and empowerment are key

So what kept patients healthy and prevented hospital visits even when they weren't being monitored? Why did the benefits persist?

"Education and empowerment," says April Crema, who was an HHM clinician for Island Health. "Knowing more about your disease gives you more confidence. Patients can watch for the warning signs and know what to do to prevent their condition from getting worse."

A change in cough, shortness of breath or fatigue can be the tip-off for lung flare-ups or cardiac arrest.

"I always tell patients that they're the experts for their bodies," says Crema. "HHM just helps empower them to intervene, when they can and when they must."

HHM encourages healthy lifestyles

HHM programs also promote better routines that mitigate their symptoms, like daily walking and healthy eating. These lifestyle choices persist after the program ends, improving health and reducing the need for hospital care—the priciest of all care types.

Meeting major health issues head-on

Heart failure and COPD are major causes of acute problems, emergency resuscitation, and death.

They are also greatly alleviated through close management.

These two factors make them natural candidates for care innovations like HHM.

Coming soon: Monitoring multiple conditions

Most patients have more than one condition. For example, more than 99% of chronic disease patients live with anxiety.

And many treatments, such as exercise, offer relief for multiple conditions.

Which is why TELUS Health is introducing a new HHM platform that will make it easier to introduce new protocols and monitor patients with multiple conditions.

"Humans are naturally complex," says Lisa Saffarek, HHM project lead with Island Health. "The multi-morbidity protocol will let us support the whole person, not just treat the disease."

¹ Evaluation of the Home Health Monitoring Expansion Project, March 1, 2018, Island Health