



My Healthe Vet and Secured Messaging: Increasing healthcare access for Multiple Sclerosis Patients

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Telemedicine is described as using advanced technologies as a means to exchange health information and provide healthcare services across geographic, time, social and cultural barriers. Telehealth used to be focused on rural health but is now on the radar of CEOs of HealthCare systems all over the country and remote monitoring is reportedly used by over 200,000 patients nationwide. It is used to monitor one million cardiac patients a year. (1) The Veterans Health Administration has focused on increasing timely access to healthcare for their veterans. Providing care to veterans with Multiple Sclerosis can be challenging due to the complex nature of their diagnosis and the wide-range impact it has on the patient, their caregivers, families, etc. It also remains a very costly condition to manage. Cost can be measured in dollars as well as the emotional and other stressors it may have on the patient and the family unit. Implementing a vibrant Virtual Medicine program has proven beneficial, time and cost effective at one VA facility.

This VA's SCI/D Center has had success with using Telehealth technologies since 2000 as a way to increasing access to care and decrease the burden to patient and caregivers. It also helps the health care team to make changes in the treatment plan and helps promote continuity of care. My HealtheVet is a web-based application that creates an online environment where Veterans, family, and clinicians may come together to optimize Veterans' health care. Using MHV, veterans create and use their Personal Health Record to make informed health care choices, stay healthy, and obtain services when needed. Secured Messaging is only for non-urgent communication with health care team. Veterans can request appointments, prescription renewals, ask health or administrative questions, etc. Health care team responds within 3 business days. Patients can communicate directly with health care workers about their condition and /or needs. This saves them from trying to track down their providers by phones and receive response in a timely manner. With video conferencing to home, providers and patients can have clinic visits with the providers being at the facility while the patient is in his/her home. This allows the health care team to not only address the patient's concerns but also those of their caregivers (both skilled and unskilled).

Outcomes:

We present the results of a sample size of our 28 patients and 5 provider populations who use My Healthe Vet/Secure Messaging.

100% of the veterans reported:

They liked the use of My Healthe Vet/ Secure Messaging to communicate with their healthcare team

They saw an improvement in communication with their healthcare teams.

They found the the My Healthe Vet website easy to use and useful for health maintenance.

An increased in quality of care.

Veteran are able to order there medications.

Review results of labs-Ray and MRI's from home.

100% of the providers who used the technology reported:

They found it more helpful and not burdensome.

They found it did not take up much time.

They would absolutely continue to use the technology.

They would recommend this program to other patients.

It helped them address patients and caregivers' needs in a timely fashion.

Conclusions and recommendations:

Use of My Healthe Vet/ Secured Messaging and home is an asset to decreasing health care burden and improve the care of patients with multiple sclerosis. Providers and the patients benefit and report improved satisfaction .We recommend the use of this virtual care environment by those providing care to these patients with complex medical conditions.

References:

Healthcare IT news: Diana Manos, Nov,2012

