

Ariel Santos, M.D.

What is telemedicine and what are the ways that we're using it now?

0:06

So telemedicine is a direct clinical care provided by a provider to a patient in a distance through virtual or electronic means. So we're doing this a lot here at TTUHSC. And we're doing telemedicine applying telemedicine to take care of a lot of patients. I am a surgeon and so we're doing that to follow up, you know, our post surgical patients. Internal Medicine has been doing that, you know, in multiple specialties like nephrology, cardiology, pulmonology, infectious diseases, and in managed care as well in correctional facilities. Telemedicine is being used after pediatrics and OB GYN patients could be potentially be followed up by telemedicine as well.

What are the benefits to telemedicine?

1:00

So there are numerous benefits for telemedicine, it actually increases access to health care. Number one, number two, you don't have to travel using telemedicine and so it is a safe and potentially a cost effective way of getting health care. And also, I would like to mention that you know, it increases patient satisfaction and also provider satisfaction as well. So we have what we call quadruple aim or in it improves patient population, it increases access to healthcare, it improves outcomes and as well as provider or position satisfaction.

Who is most likely to use telemedicine?

1:45

So I think telemedicine could be used by everyone from pediatrics to geriatrics. I initially thought that this will be a hit only among millennials since they are very equipped digitally. However a study showed that even geriatric patients or older population that we thought had the digital divide will struggle with telemedicine, but they do love it. So a lot of people are embracing telemedicine. And I would also say that people in remote areas as well will really benefit from telemedicine and there are some special populations like those in reservations, incarcerated population that using telemedicine could increase an effective as well as cost effective health care in those population.

Why is it important for providers to be trained in telemedicine?

2:43

I think it's imperative that our current providers as well as our future providers will be educated and how to do telemedicine. There are many ways that telemedicine is different from the bedside or the office visit. You know, we have what we called webside manner, you know, in comparison to the bedside manner. And so I think there are some knowledge, you know, that we had to impart our current and future providers using telemedicine, we identified six domains that could potentially needed to learn, you know, in order to deliver an effective telemedicine visit as well as virtual care.

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Anything else to add?

3:37

I just like to mention as well that, you know, there are numerous challenges that telemedicine will encounter, you know, in the very near future. There are some challenges that we have right now. One of this is probably broadband. If we don't have infrastructure like broadband, we will not have telemedicine, so that is very important. It is also very important to educate our providers and our students, not just medical students, but other students of either healthcare professions like pharmacists, physical therapists, speech language pathologist because they could potentially benefit from telemedicine as well. I would say that it is not just centered on the medical care but the Allied you know, health professionals could benefit from this as well. And also, there are some legislations you know, that probably need to do to broaden further telemedicine and I'm pretty sure our federal and state governments are working really hard on how to improve, improve further. Telemedicine when it comes to reimbursement legislations, as well as making sure this is safe, you know, improved compliance. There's a lot of phishing and the, you know, breach of privacy information, you know, because we're using virtual care, but I would say this is you know, as safe as it doing virtual banking, you know, we usually have banks, and but now we're doing a lot of, you know, mobile and mobile banking, right. And so these are convenient and it is safe. I would actually say that, you know, this is not replacement to our current healthcare, this is a thing as an adjunct, or things are bridge, you know, to make our healthcare bit better and more accessible. Like I still go to bank and see, you know, my favorite teller and discuss things with the bank manager for some issues that is appropriate. But most of the time I do virtual banking, so I think it's safe, and they're pretty much the same.

How can someone start using telemedicine?

5:46

So we have to ask our provider, you know, TTUHSC is providing a lot of virtual, you know, services and we should just ask for that. And the other thing, though, I'm the principal investigator of TexLa TRC, our Texas Louisiana telehealth Resource Center, and we're here to help institutions like TTUHSC in both Texas and Louisiana area, and to do technical assistance, not just to providers, but to patients as well. So we're more than happy to assist and give, you know, tips, tools and toolkits on how to, you know, do a proper and effective telemedicine visit.