Risk Management in Telehealth Medicine

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**Telehealth Medicine**

Telehealth medicine is a novel technology that helps patients receive healthcare through means of communication. In this method, the process of assessing the health of the patients is practiced by digital photography, videoconferences, websites, and instant messages. It removes the need for patients to visit hospitals and face-to-face interactions with health professionals. It is a highly efficient practice of connecting health providers and facilities that are located geographically far apart. It comprises of several methods and advanced technologies that range from traditional data applications and diagnostics to innovative robotic surgery, emergency consultations and prescriptions (Bertoncello, Colucci, Baldovin, Buja, & Baldo, 2018).

**Risks associated with telemedicine**

Though telemedicine has brought revolution in the health sector and has made access to these services efficient and convenient, the system also poses several risks associated with it. The reliance of the system on continuous and digital data transmission through complex computing networks may cause serious issues. Throughout the process, there are chances for diagnostic, interpretation, and technical issues. It may also have risks for patient security and violations of the privacy codes. The transmission pathway may have glitches in the transmission medium or network site. Secure transmission requires effective checkpoints at differing transmission points. The data can either be sent through internet, satellite, or virtual private network. The risks associated with this system are the authentication of the data accession permit and organization's means of an interface. Privacy of the patients is also a paramount concern during the transmission of data. Issues like hardware tampering, interception, and unauthorized access might violate the privacy policy of HIPPA, federal, and state laws.

The quality care through telehealth programs can be compromised as the system depends on the ongoing monitoring and improvement plans that should change according to the needs of the patients. In some cases, there might be certain issues related to diagnosis, data compilation, following clinical protocols, patient satisfaction, delayed consultations, and patient over satisfaction. Individual incident reporting is very crucial in this system; however, sometimes there are some encounters where the proper checklists and documentation is not well perceived. The matter of cost accountability and keeping the economic vitality while providing better services can also pose a threat to the telehealth system. Other risks include training, communication, malfunctioning of the equipment and communication issues (Di Cerbo, Morales-Medina, Palmieri, & Iannitti, 2015).

Telehealth organizations should also convey the detailed operations procedure and the risk associated with them in order to avoid any legal violations. Telemedicine also encounters malpractice complexities as the communication between patients and the physicians may not be effective, and there might be coverage gaps. The standards of care that are appropriate for the physician might not be adequate for the patient (Hong, 2016). The standard of care varies state to state, and thus, due to geographical distances, it cannot be established that laws and regulations of which state will be followed. Such practices have not been yet tested in the legal system. Only a few states have set a standard of care such as Hawaii, Texas, and Colorado, yet their system is flawed.

**Risk Management**

The implementation of telehealth risk management has a conventional focus on providing patient safety and reducing medical errors. It also focuses on protecting the financial liability of organization. Telehealth technology can be improved by properly utilizing the medical care facilities, improving the communication pattern among these organizations, physicians, and patients. Risk management strategies also include the proper verification and authentication of the data about medical conditions and patients' preferences (NEJM Catalyst, 2018). The individuals associated with this technology should comply with the guidelines and regulations identified by legal authorities and health insurance and accountability organizations.

**References**

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