

NEWS RELEASE

Diabetes Month: Telehomecare pilot benefits patients with diabetes

TORONTO, November., 2014 - A pilot program in diabetes care that uses technology to provide daily remote monitoring of patients from home, along with weekly health coaching from a specially-trained clinician is underway in southern Ontario.

The pilot extends the reach of Telehomecare, an Ontario Telemedicine Network initiative that complements the care people with chronic health conditions already receive from their doctors and other healthcare providers. Telehomecare currently targets patients across the province with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or congestive heart failure (CHF).

"It's well known that patients who receive self-management education are better able to control their blood sugar, and are able to lose weight and keep it off, which makes for improved quality of life," says Cindy Fajardo, RN, Telehomecare Clinical Practice Manager, OTN.

Pilot participants receive, at no charge to them, a tablet computer and medical devices to measure their blood pressure, oxygen saturation levels and weight. They answer a daily series of questions about the patterns of their blood glucose levels, as well as questions to assess changes in how they are feeling or managing their care. The answers, along with their vital signs, are submitted electronically to a registered nurse or respiratory therapist who monitors results daily for changes. The clinician also does weekly coaching sessions by phone addressing topics such as medication management, symptom management, foot and eye care management and lifestyle changes.

"Ultimately, the goal is to use Telehomecare to give people living with diabetes the skills and confidence they need to live their lives as optimally as possible," says Cindy Fajardo. Studies support that approach; a 2008 review of telemedicine evidence from 78 international studies by the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health found that home telemonitoring provided better glycemic control than traditional care.

In Ontario, Telehomecare is already making a difference. There has been a 70% reduction in hospitalizations six months after discharge compared to pre-Telehomecare usage and a 53% reduction in emergency department visits six

months after discharge compared to pre-Telehomecare usage in the Telehomecare program delivered by the William Osler Health System.

Telehomecare is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Canada Health Infoway. It is being delivered in partnership with Local Health Integration Networks who identify host hospitals, CCACs or family health teams.

For further information: about Telehomecare and chronic disease management visit: www.OntarioTelehomecare.ca, www.RxTelehomecare.ca.

To arrange a media interview, please contact:

Sharon Airhart

Telehomecare Communications Lead

416-312-3779

sairhart@otn.ca