

Telemedicine in a global context

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Abstract: Telemedicine is part of the most recent revolution in healthcare. It will be most impactful to the developing world. The rapid advance of technology has made the entry into the telemedicine field much faster and cheaper. Telemedicine helps provide patient-centered care, reduce healthcare cost, save lives and improve patient's health.

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Telemedicine is part of the most recent revolution in healthcare. People around the world will be just a click away from the world's leading authorities in medical care. The sea-change paradigm in healthcare is that technology is bringing healthcare to the patient instead of the unsustainably expensive and impossible status quo of bringing the patient to healthcare.

Although the developed countries are leading the way, this revolution will be most impactful to the developing world. Just as wireless communication reduced the need for infrastructure of the classic hard-wired telephone calls, so too will telemedicine jump start dozens of countries and their citizens to improved care. Suddenly, there will be less need to have a doctor in every city, hamlet, and village, when a trained health professional extender can be the eyes and ears of the distant doctor. Further, trained specialists can help diagnose and treat patients thousands of miles away from where they live. Radiographic images and laboratory tests can be interpreted for the betterment of the patient.

The rapid advance of technology has made the entry into the telemedicine field much faster and cheaper. The "off the shelf" equipment necessary to connect people to health professionals allows even the poorest countries to quickly enter into life and limb saving for their citizens.

In the US, approximately 100,000 telemedicine consults

are performed each month. Although that seems like a large number (and it is compared to just a few years ago), there are 80 million doctor/patient consultations each month in the US. So even in a very developed world, the possibilities are just starting. Soon, because much of the infrastructure is already built, remote monitoring in people's homes will be the standard. This revolution in healthcare will markedly reduce the need for nursing home management. Anything that reduces the need for bricks and mortar facilities reduces costs and improves patient's well-being.

Patient-centered care is the goal throughout the world. Certainly, when a patient is cared for in the home through wearable technology, everyone wins. Wearable technology allows constant checking and through wireless connections, doctors or nurses can monitor a patient across the city or across the world.

Tele-trauma centers have been saving lives and reducing morbidity. With wireless connections at the site of the injury, victims have a far greater chance of recovery.

The cost of educating doctors is enormous. Telemedicine brings existing doctors into the field immediately. When a doctor has time, that time can be filled with a remote patient. Thus, without any increase in cost and the immediacy that our world now requires, patients can have access to affordable and convenient healthcare.

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Footnote

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