

Telehealth can reduce deaths by 45%, study shows

Wireless monitoring devices help patients be healthier, live independently

By Lucas Mearian

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Computerworld - Using remote monitoring technology to keep tabs on patients' blood sugar and cardiopulmonary disease can reduce the risk of patient mortality by up to 45%, according to a U.K. Department of Health study.

The preliminary findings showed that, if used correctly, TeleHealth can deliver a 15% reduction in emergency room visits; a 20% reduction in emergency admissions; a 14% reduction in elective admissions; a 14% reduction in bed days; and an 8% reduction in tariff costs.

More strikingly, the findings showed a 45% reduction in mortality rates.

In the U.S., the federal government is aggressively pushing for electronic health records (EHR). Telehealth technology, which [allows doctors to monitor their patients' health wirelessly](#) in real time, could be combined with online health records for a highly accessible, interactive patient history.

Last year, a report from Accenture showed that the rise of inexpensive Internet connectivity and smaller, cheaper and "smarter" health electronics should deliver better, more efficient health care.

The U.K. Department of Health said its study was the first of its kind and one of the most complex and comprehensive studies it has ever undertaken. It involved about 6,000 chronically-ill patients at 238 healthcare practices across three counties in the UK. It took two years to complete.

The study looked at how the adoption of telehealth monitoring technologies could reduce the mounting financial burden of healthcare for the chronically ill. The study focused on patients with three conditions: diabetes, coronary heart disease and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). It also showed how technology supports people who live independently, and how they can be more in control of their own health and care.

"The first set of initial findings ... show that, if delivered properly, telehealth can substantially reduce mortality, reduce the need for admissions to hospital, lower the number of bed days

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spent in hospital and reduce the time spent in [emergency rooms]," the Health Department said in a statement. "At least three million people with long-term conditions and/or social care needs could benefit from using telehealth and telecare."

Currently, six schools are evaluating the data, including City University London, University of Oxford, University of Manchester, and the London School of Economics. The study looked at the data under five themes -- service utilization; reported outcomes such as quality of life; cost effectiveness; user and professionals' experience; and influence of organizational factors to adoption).

Three TeleHealth technology providers were selected for the program, offering remote patient management systems for study:

- Philips HealthCare used its [Motiva technology](#) to monitor about 550 heart failure, COPD and diabetes patients in the London borough of Newham.
- Philips Motiva is an interactive healthcare platform that connects patients with chronic conditions to their healthcare providers through a home television and a broadband Internet connection.
- Newham, England is challenged with providing long-term healthcare for more than 17% of its chronically-ill population as well as being ranked as having the highest diabetes rate and death rate from stroke in the UK.