

ABSTRACT: 2013 ELAM Institutional Action Project Poster Symposium

Project Title: TELEMEDICINE and Internal Medicine/Geriatrics Home Care Program

Name and Institution: Ivonne Z. Jiménez Velázquez, MD - University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine

Collaborators: Rafael Rodríguez Mercado, MD, Wendy Matos, PhD.

Background: Nowadays, communication has improved markedly with the development of personal computers, internet and intelligent cell phones. This technology has a great potential to benefit the health care system and the people receiving services. Telemedicine aims to overcome distance barriers and provide adequate clinical health care to people by improving access to medical services.

The World Health Organization defines telemedicine as: *“The delivery of health care services, where distance is a critical factor, by all health care professionals using information and communication technologies for the exchange of valid information for diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease and injuries, research and evaluation, and for the continuing education of health care providers, all in the interests of advancing the health of individuals and their communities”.*

Challenge: Our project’s main challenge is to overcome the budget and legal issues associated with telemedicine infrastructure at the medicine department, in order to be able to provide specialized geriatric services for homebound patients. We propose a step by step program rolled out, implementing activities by level of complexity. The telemedicine initiatives in the less complex level are those associated with store-and-forward data; the second level of complexity are the ones related to remote monitoring of events; while the initiatives with the highest level of complexity are those requiring real-time / interactive services.

Opportunity: When the health professional on duty has little or no access to expert help, telemedicine can make a difference. Services such as: teleradiology, teledermatology, teleneurology, and telepsychiatry are in great need for our population and the development of the required telemedicine infrastructure can be an option to make them available for many patients. Telemedicine can enhance resident’s diagnostic and clinical management skills, as well as patient’s engagement in self care and health improvement.

Purpose/Objectives:

The purpose of the TELEMEDICINE and Internal Medicine/Geriatrics Home Care Program provides a formal opportunity for the residents to develop knowledge, skills and desirable attitude toward using telemedicine and receiving timely support from clinical experts. It will help in the development of a home care program and also demonstrates the importance of multidisciplinary participation in the development of telemedicine projects.

Methods/Approach:

Write the project in compliance with the ACGME requisites and education innovation program. Seek the endorsement of specialty program directors, medicine core faculty and institutional resources to support the initiative. Communication plan will be shared with the residents, geriatric’s fellows, attendings and other stakeholders. Complete the project proposal to seek additional funds.

Outcomes and Evaluation: The project received the UPR Medical Sciences Campus Chancellor’s endorsement; equipment is available to initiate the project. Level of satisfaction of homebound patients and their relatives has improved markedly with these services offered at the VA as a pilot project.

A collaborative agreement is to be signed with the radiology department to allocate money and work in the development of combined initiatives.

Communication with the Veterans Administration Associate Chief for Extended Care, Medical Services Director confirmed availability to share lessons learned from the resident’s experience in the telemedicine rotation.