

Improving Medication Adherence and Self-Management for Chronic Heart Failure at the Veterans Administration Central California Health Care System

The Veterans Administration Central California Health Care System (VACCHCS) is beginning a novel Care Coordination Telehealth program that may help older, community-based veterans better self-manage chronic heart failure (CHF) and adhere to medication regimens.

According to the VACCHCS, more than 5 million Americans have CHF. Older adults are disproportionately affected by CHF because prevalence rises with age. CHF is the leading cause of hospitalization in patients over the age of 65. Frequent hospitalizations are often due to preventable causes such as suboptimal medication adherence and self care.

The VACCHCS will use medication adherence assessment and an array of technologies to improve remote CHF management and monitoring. Each participating patient will receive a home monitoring system equipped with a digital scale, an automatic blood pressure cuff, and a Health Buddy® system, an easy to use tabletop device with a display screen and simple four-button interface. Each day, patients will use the device at home to answer a series of questions about how they feel, their medications, and their symptoms. Through these daily sessions patients will also learn about ways to better manage their condition, and receive reminders to

take their medication. The data are sent over a telephone line or Ethernet connection to a secure data center where it is accessed by care managers to track progress and review alerts that act as early warning signs and show potentially serious changes in a patient's health condition.

Nationwide, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) currently treats approximately 41,000 patients in its telehealth program--the largest telehealth program in the world. Published results of four years of data from the VHA's telehealth program showed a 19 percent reduction in hospitalizations and 25 percent reduction in "bed days of care" for participating patients.



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Project Collaborators

VACCHCS

The Veterans Affairs Central California Health Care System is a general medicine and surgery teaching hospital, providing a full range of patient care services, with state-of-the-art technology as well as education and research. Outpatient services are provided in a managed care environment by five primary care teams and numerous specialty care clinics. A 60-bed Community Living Center provides skilled nursing and rehabilitation care.

The Center for Technology and Aging

The Center for Technology and Aging (techandaging.org) supports more rapid adoption and diffusion of technologies that enhance independence and improve home and community-based care for older adults. Through grants, research, public policy involvement and development of practical tools and best practice guidelines, the Center serves as an independent, non-profit resource for improving the quality and cost-effectiveness of long-term care services. The Center was established with funding from The SCAN Foundation (thescanfoundation.org) and is affiliated with the Public Health Institute (phi.org) in Oakland, CA.

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