BACKGROUND

Homecare (HC) nurses need wound care provider support for patients with complex wounds to facilitate assessment and recommendations that will promote healing process and decrease cost of care. Historically, the HC Wound Specialist Nurse would collaborate with HC nurses on complex, non-progressing wounds through email and phone calls or, in cases where the patient lived in the Salt Lake City or Provo areas, would schedule and travel to the patient’s home for a shared visit with the assigned HC nurse. These visits would result in a request for orders from the PCP for a treatment change or a referral to a wound clinic. To receive homecare services, a patient must be home bound. For many patients, arranging travel to a wound clinic for specialized care is very challenging. Some patients decline wound clinic services because of the cost and difficulty of transportation to a brick and mortar clinic site.

METHOD

In January 2017, the Wound and Homecare teams began a pilot to provide TeleHealth consultations in the patient’s home using Skype for Business on HC nurses’ iPhones. Patients targeted had non-progressing wounds or wounds requiring daily dressing changes, and significant challenges in transporting to a wound clinic. Once identified, treatment options were explained to the patient and an order for Wound TeleHealth was obtained. The HC nurse obtained patient consent, facilitated scheduling the consult, participated in the consult and updated the treatment plan as directed by the TeleHealth Provider. The HC Wound Specialist Nurse also started utilizing the Skype for Business application to perform shared visits in real time.

CASE STUDIES

Study Number 1:

Male patient with history of quadriplegia who is ventilator dependent with pressure injuries that had not healed or improved for more than one year.

- Able to remove negative pressure wound therapy DME dressing that had been on for two years. The cost of this dressing to CMS was approximately $26,759.
- Cost for non-urgent special transport for patient to get to clinic: $350 and four hours of time.
- Improved efficiency in clinic after prior Homecare consult, and the MD already had a clear plan for procedure.
- Wound from which VAC was removed healed within one month of starting TeleHealth.

Study Number 2:

78 year old female patient with recurrent venous ulcers and cellulitis since 2013.

- Improved patient compliance after TeleHealth physician reinforced nurses instructions.
- TeleHealth wound care provides expanded access to wound care experts, streamlined care planning, easier wound management, reduction in ED utilization and inpatient length of stay, all resulting in an overall decrease in treatment costs.

REFERENCES


RESULTS

Both patients in the Homecare Wound TeleHealth pilot experienced accelerated healing. In one of the two cases, an expensive DME wound care device was discontinued, creating a cost savings to CMS.

Homecare Coordinator cost of shared visits down 89%.

Prior to initiating the Skype for Business application to Homecare, the Homecare Wound and Ostomy Coordinator averaged up to three in home visits per week. With travel and in home visit time, each visit would take approximately two hours at $33/hr. Travel averaged between 40 – 60 (50.52/mile) miles round trip. Due to location of her office, these types of visits were limited to the Salt Lake City and Provo area. For Homecare patients outside of this area, nurses would securely e-mail photos or call the Coordinator to describe issues occurring.

After Skype for Business was initiated the Coordinator averaged two TeleHealth calls/week. Each call took 20 minutes with no travel involved. This process has now been expanded to all patient locations within Intermountain Homecare.

CONCLUSION

- Patient wound healing was accelerated
- Patients express high satisfaction with Homecare Wound TH visits
- Unexpected benefit for Homecare wound nurse specialist
- Enables real time collaboration between the Healthcare nurse, Wound MD and Patient to build wound care plan together
- Builds trust between HC nurse and Wound MD
- Taking orders real time improves care efficiency.