Transforming Nursing Care in Saudi Arabia through Telehealth

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The Need for Telehealth in Saudi Arabia Analyzing the nation's state of health, the allocation of the professional workforce, and hospital bed distribution is faced with stagnation and a quandary to achieve standards. Both healthcare providers and policymakers work to provide the best healthcare to citizens. The conception and instability of healthcare systems are problems in many countries, including Saudi Arabia. Juxtaposing national health systems informs a conversation about national laws, standards, objectives, and values. Ultimately, access to such services plays a key role in providing healthcare and the borders upon how we eat, where we work, and how our air and water are regulated, and where national systems succeed or not, glimpsing their capacity to maintain the health of populations and individuals. In search of a more transformative period in our lives, telehealth interventions have the promising capabilities of alleviating demand on scarce healthcare resources; however, there is still little evidence on the short- or long-term benefits of these interventions.

Methods: Title: Transforming Nursing Care in Saudi Arabia through Telehealth.

Introduction: Telehealth is the use of medical information that is electronically communicated to support healthcare with patients for assessment, education, and management. Telehealth could help decrease patients' waiting time, travel, and resource consumption. The objective of this study was to explore how telehealth is used and how it can be used to improve the quality and access to healthcare for nursing care in Saudi Arabian hospitals.

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Methods: In order to identify the pivotal topic, a qualitative approach using a focus group was adopted. Participants were registered nurses working in different clinical areas among various hospitals. For the focus group discussions, researchers developed a moderated facilitation guide. A facilitator and two scribes per group were used to divide twenty participants.

Conclusion: Health care worldwide has had to adapt to enormous changes in the model of care delivery over the period of COVID-19. Most of these changes have been forced upon health care organizations rapidly due to crisis circumstances and have been maintained as a necessity of safety and as a shared adaptation of need. It is the hope that some of the changes of necessity will evolve towards long-term goals. The use of innovative technology developed to change these practices for the benefit of the health system, health practitioners, and—most importantly—the patients who use these services has been both a force for rapid change and for maintaining quality health care delivery. Nursing has been the foundation of support to many of these innovations and has benefited from the engagement and involvement with professional practice, research projects, and the building of programs for the delivery of services that promote the development of nursing excellence.

Health care in Saudi Arabia is actively promoting the advancement of education of Saudi nurses, with an ever-growing number achieving postgraduate qualifications, and an aspiration to have all professional nurses qualified to graduate level by the year 2030. There is also an overwhelming hunger for knowledge and advanced education; Saudi nurses show a high commitment to learning and are eager to acquire and improve their knowledge and skills. With the onus on the development of Health 4.0, nursing in Saudi Arabia remains determinedly in step with these developments to ensure that advancements in the care of the citizen are assured. This is crucial as the demographics are also changing—70% of the Saudi population will be aged over 60 by 2040 and an expat workforce is steadily returning to their own countries. In conclusion, and in answer to the question posed, the role of the nurse in Saudi Arabia in relation to the development of digital health practices is transformative and thriving as it meets the significant challenges of the healthcare system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

1. Introduction

Telehealth is transforming healthcare with its cost-effective quality care approach, addressing complex healthcare situations, and redefining the relationship between healthcare professionals and patients. Nursing professionals work as e-nurses in the telehealth environment with expanded roles and functions, translating their knowledge and personal skills into technology. Considering the low number of Saudi nationals working as nurses, telehealth creates opportunities for females and older professionals through this technological trajectory, which encourages individuals to undertake positions by reducing the stress of continuous 24/7 care. Using technology, e-nurses are able to support and guide patients with their issues, thereby correctly and

independently performing their intricate tasks. The use of this costeffective telehealth technology is empowering and brings meaning to nurses' work in providing increased care services to the population in their chosen environment, leading to several benefits such as reduced travel expenses and having the right help at the right time at the patient's home. The nurses would have better patient control in enabling continued oral cancer treatments, along with nearby consultations and surgical follow-ups, with a rest period and patient family instruction. This will maximize patient comfort towards early healing and provide valuable information resulting in policy formulation while prioritizing gender neutrality, geographic concerns, and universal social equality and sustainability.

1.1. Background of Nursing Care in Saudi Arabia

A decrease in the nursing workforce has a major impact on all healthcare sectors due to the increasing demands of the aging population. The healthcare system of Saudi Arabia is already feeling the effects of an aging workforce and nursing shortage, and the situation will likely worsen. The absence of a national nursing model, caused by cultural ties and religious implications, leads to low interest in nursing careers for Saudi people. The primary reason for this low interest, particularly among Saudi women, is that the nation's families remain reluctant to see women employed within such settings. However, a telehealth system can create unique opportunities from telehealth nursing employment and deliver an abundance of opportunities for students, potential nursing students, and new graduates of the nursing profession, as these opportunities are primarily reliant on the physical time between nurses and clients, which does not affect the service provided. Dual opportunities to create traditional remote telehealth, as well as intranational telehealth, support the delivery of nursing care to and from the nurses' region, working in transitioning nursing care for these Saudi clients. Managing healthcare in developing nations must be unique and specific for each individual nation to meet both national priorities and healthcare demands, ensuring effective and high-quality healthcare services. A telehealth nursing workforce can address the healthcare needs in Saudi Arabia, utilizing technological remote healthcare nurse teams to correct or maintain the health status of both individuals and families. The emergent telehealth nursing workforce must engage in a cultural exchange, the foundation of telehealth itself, to achieve medical treatments that meet the unique requirements of each Saudi nursing population. Providing nursing education to Saudi citizens and preparing them to work in a healthcare system is essential for Saudi Arabia to survive the nursing workforce crisis and the increasing healthcare demands of the Saudi population and expatriates residing in Saudi Arabia. This deserves the attention of the Saudi nursing community, expatriate nurses who have been working in Saudi Arabia, and skilled professionals from other nursing practices.

1.2. Importance of Telehealth in Healthcare

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In healthcare, technology has become integral for delivering safe and efficient care. As a primary force for change in healthcare service delivery, telehealth has seen the rise of both biomedical and information technology. Telehealth is the delivery of health and health-related services using various forms of information and communication technologies. Moreover, the utilization of technologies minimizes the impact of acute and chronic care delays experienced by providing services to those who cannot be visited and seen in healthcare facilities. With this, the concept of telehealth has emerged as a need-based solution and as a complement to conventional healthcare services.

Previous studies have shown that telehealth services provide better health-related outcomes. These outcomes could be a decrease in the duration of a patient's stay in healthcare facilities, early discharge, reduced travel times, costs, and health service utilization. In addition, the same study demonstrated that telehealth education can not only enhance healthcare professionals' confidence, knowledge, and skills, but can also be used to facilitate improved patient and healthcare communication and education. In relation to this, it has been supported that telehealth applications have

also shown to be beneficial throughout the continuum of care in both urban and rural areas by facilitating the use of patient information to deliver care. It is a tool to enhance access to quality health care. In nursing, especially in Saudi Arabia, telehealth technology will have to be foreseen and educated as both a valuable connector and relationship tool. As relationships are fundamental to the nursing role, telehealth technology has the potential to positively transform the nursing care given to patients in Saudi Arabia.

2. Current State of Telehealth in Saudi Arabia

There are not many studies available that focus on telehealth use in Saudi Arabia. Telehealth systems have been deemed to be a potential solution for a range of hospitals, which are normally unbalanced in terms of healthcare quality regarding revised and available service use and the delegated nurse-to-patient proportions. A large part of Saudi Arabia consists of distant rural or desert areas where the configurations of these more pertinent facilities would conveniently remain well above the capacity of building any local clinical center, taking into account the very large range of singular remote areas that they potentially serve. Adding to the apparent problem is the country's recent population development as well as youth growth. The growth and overall psychographic needs of a larger youth promote a greater focus on easier access to healthcare grading convenience.

The use of telehealth is mentioned to the Saudi Arabian population in the Kingdom Vision 2030 improvement program of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Minister of

Health Authority: "The health e-service aims to enable beneficiaries to receive the necessary medical services through information technology tools and communication technologies, providing care services and medical counseling in a timely, easy, and safe manner, and is appropriate to preserve their privacy." The idea means that future healthcare business strategies towards continuing business growth in the Saudi Arabian private sectors are better served by addressing patient needs, particularly those who are currently most inflamed and positively need to be in the business of minimizing amounts that meaningfully drive health and wellness, widespread use of technologies to improve diagnosis, and data to improve services, driving front-office rewards towards those targets. With this stable neighborhood, the result would be healthier but still severed by a series of socioeconomic and security/demographic platforms proved to reach a wider audience.

3. Challenges and Barriers to Implementing Telehealth in Nursing Care

Saudi Arabia has the largest and most comprehensive hospital services to provide quality health care services to the people. What makes Saudi Arabia unique is that nursing care has been mandated by national health policies and devoted to strategies intended to improve the health of people in the area of health, which is free at the point of delivery. Despite this, there are several challenges to the delivery of nursing care. It is crucial to discuss the barriers because the implication of telehealth use is new in Saudi Arabia. The nurses' barriers to the use of telehealth will partly establish the usefulness of telehealth. Using telehealth will have an effect equivalent to the in-

participant feature, suggesting that telehealth can endure when the ability is a priority to the users. The successes of telehealth depend fundamentally on the capability of the providers to apply the delivery in the behavior which the users perceive as easy access to use. (Alsufyani et al.2020)(Alasiri & Mohammed, 2022)(Chowdhury et al., 2021)(Asmri et al., 2020)

4. Strategies for Successful Implementation of Telehealth in Nursing Care

Given the national healthcare system in Saudi Arabia and with emphasis on the Ministry of Health initiative to transform care by providing professional support for policy, planning, and strategy decisions that are based on achieving excellence in nursing and world-class care, some important strategies are suggested to support the successful implementation of E-Health and Telemedicine systems in connection with nursing care in Saudi hospitals. Nurses and their supervisors at different levels should take part in the selection of nursing informatics through a formal selection process. This would cause high levels of satisfaction as measured by a standardized tool. The institution has chosen an appropriate and manageable replacement for its failing electronic documentation system. Considering the changing environment of Saudi Arabia, the nursing home or hospital must think about what they want in a new system.

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Because of the increase in the use of technology in patient care, the recommendation is to have baccalaureate degrees in nursing. (Al-Alawi et al., 2020)(Porat-Dahlerbruch et al.2022)(Canzan et al.2022)(Contreras et al.2020)

A committee composed of representatives from all hospitals and one from the nursing office will develop an evaluation process for any replacements. Making sure they have the appropriate policies and procedures to ensure confidentiality and security of the data, it is important for nurses to address this issue when planning the electronic documentation system for implementation. The actual data entry tool in a system, screen design, or user interface design affects each nurse's productivity. It is important that nurses are allowed to see and voice their opinions on their workflow, not just their managers. The opinions of the group on technology are valuable as decisions are made on the design and the use of electronic documentation devices in hospitals. The opinions of the group within the nursing group are valuable as decisions are made on the design and the use of electronic documentation.

5. Future Directions and Implications for Nursing Practice in Saudi Arabia

The study has explored the experiences of Saudi nurses in using telehealth to enhance nursing care and management. The nurses believed the technology could potentially contribute to delivering nursing services closer to home and to address healthcare disparity. However, the continuation of this groundbreaking care model is likely to be fraught with issues, including finding ways to sustain telehealth initiatives, ensuring service user involvement, and enabling the replacement of traditional nursing values and tasks with technological ones. Our findings indicate that an organizational shift from a task-focused approach to value-based traits such as critical thinking, empathy, and the human touch is needed to drive telehealth's long-term sustainability. This research is significant as the Saudi government

continues its Vision 2030 objectives, which propose to revolutionize healthcare in the Arab region using telehealth and to enable sustained training for Saudi nurses.

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