



SUPPORTING REMOTE HEALTH CARE USING TELEMEDICINE

Evaluation of the Scottish Cisco HealthPresence™ Pilot



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AIM

New technologies have the potential to change the way health care is delivered, enabling clinicians to provide health care to patients in remote locations. A trial of Cisco HealthPresence™ was set up within the emergency department at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, focusing on patients with non-life threatening illness and injury. The aim was to assess primary care type consultations.

Cisco HealthPresence™ represents a collaborative effort between the Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG) - the global strategic consulting arm of Cisco - and the Scottish Centre for Telehealth (SCT). HealthPresence provides a "virtual clinic" experience for patients, combining Cisco TelePresence with medical equipment (thermometer, blood pressure, pulse oximetry, pulse rate, telephonic stethoscope, ENT scope and general examination camera) to create an environment similar to seeing a health professional face to face.

METHODOLOGY

During designated clinical sessions, patients were invited to participate in the trial. An assistant briefed the patients, obtained written consent, escorted them to the HealthPresence room, and supported the consultation. The doctor was remote from the patient, collected details about the patient's condition and recommended a management plan. All patients received a second face to face consultation from the same doctor, to confirm the management plan. All patients completed a questionnaire about the experience. Key staff and a small sample of patients were interviewed.

OUTCOMES AND RESULTS

One hundred and five patients were seen - 51% were male. The age distribution was from 16 years to over 75 years of age.

The main clinical presentations were pain, injuries including cuts, bites, burns and fractures, infections and ear, nose and throat problems. Forty two percent of patients were given advice, 25% were prescribed analgesia, 26% were prescribed antibiotics and 15% required x-ray.

At least 90% of patients recorded positive experience of HealthPresence across a range of aspects. No patients



felt that the assistant's presence was intrusive. All interviewees thought that HealthPresence would be beneficial in rural or remote areas.

CONCLUSION

Patients and health professionals are enthusiastic about Cisco HealthPresence™. The role of the assistant is beneficial and should be considered for future service use. This early study has shown much potential for continuing to pilot this novel consultation method in unscheduled care. HealthPresence has the potential to transform access to services for many patients and to improve the effectiveness of delivery across a number of services.

Full details are available in the published article: Heaney D, McClusky C, Caldwell J, King G, Webster K, Mair F, Ferguson J. The introduction of a new consulting technology into the National Health Service in Scotland. *Telemedicine and eHealth* 2009 Vol 15, 6.