

Abstract

This paper presents an overview of the leadership role of advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) with the implementation and evaluation of a newly implemented pediatric diabetes telehealth program. Type 1 diabetes has increased in children by 23% from 2001-2009. Rural communities additionally have increased disparities related to access barriers and a large minority population with poorer overall health. Research evidence supports telehealth as an effective alternative to bring preventive diabetes care to remote areas. The project took place at a rural pediatric outpatient specialty clinic in partnership with a tertiary center telehealth network. The telehealth program quality improvement (QI) project explored caregiver satisfaction for this newly implemented program. Following teleconferencing, a convenience sample of caregivers (N=14) completed a 9 item Telehealth Diabetes Caregiver Satisfaction Survey (TDCSS), adapted from a validated, reliable Telepsychiatry Survey. TDCSS responses (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) indicated caregivers were highly satisfied with the communication/privacy (M=4.8), access to care (M=4.1), and quality of services (M=5.0). Integral to the quality of the telemedicine clinic initiative was the multidisciplinary collaborative teamwork, continuous QI, and dependable technology. APRNs provided technology expertise, interdisciplinary collaboration leadership, care coordination, and advocacy for policy changes. Future nursing implications are to recognize the impact of telehealth and APRNs leadership role to help implement these innovative programs into rural communities to improve access to care, health care cost and outcomes. APRNs can conduct future translational research to establish best practice guidelines for telehealth. Future QI could include longer studies with clinical metrics such as HbA1C, hospitalizations, emergency room use, and caregiver burden and quality of life measures.

Key Words: telehealth, pediatric, diabetes, access to care, advanced practice nurses role