

Rural Community Care and Telehealth

OVERVIEW

This learning activity introduces concepts relevant to caring for clients in rural areas. The character of rural and remote Canada is delineated, with an emphasis on diversity. The discussion provides a contextual understanding of clients who live in these areas and some of the practice characteristics of rural nurses. The rewards and challenges of rural nursing, including the key features of this practice, are identified and explained in depth.

Telehealth has become a topic of focus for many health care professionals across the globe, in answer to several issues. Proximity to health care, shorter hospitalizations, shortage of health care professionals, workloads, and the advent of sophisticated technologies all contribute to this phenomenon. Nurses are not the only professionals involved; there are now several branches of telehealth, including telemedicine, telepharmaceuticals, telepsychology, teleradiology, and so on. Virtually every member of the health care team can learn to provide care using technology and computers as the medium of assessment, diagnosis and care directives.



“Telehealth is innovative and rapidly changing to provide more information, quicker communication and instant access within health care. Nurses' in all practice settings can use telehealth to deliver care, provide education, monitor clients' progress, access client records, obtain information and foster communication and collaboration among themselves, other health professionals and clients. Telehealth can be used to replace or complement some components of face-to-face health care. It has the potential to increase accessibility, particularly for clients in rural, remote, or under-served locations. Telehealth may be used to provide more timely, effective and efficient care, and enable the client to remain closer to home. Nurses use telehealth when it can enhance, augment, or otherwise improve care and services for clients” (CRNBC, 2005, p. 1).

Telehealth is not a replacement for in-person care, but it does fill a need for clients who wish contact with health care professionals yet either cannot or do not want to have to go to an agency or clinic for treatment. Telehealth is having a positive impact on rural health care, where clients are scattered over large distances and may have trouble driving into more settled areas for health care.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This learning activity is intended to give the learner the opportunity to:

- Define and describe the meaning of rural in a Canadian context.
- Investigate the impact of the rural context on the health status and access to care experienced by rural residents.

- Identify the challenges associated with being a community resident in rural Canada.
- Understand the context of rural nursing practice and its interrelationship with the care of clients in rural areas.
- Explore the current and future applications of telehealth and e-health both locally and globally.
- Recognize the advantages and challenges inherent in the practices of telehealth.
- Explore the impact telehealth can have on rural health

PREPARATION

READ Chapter 23 in Stamler, L. & Yiu, L. (2012). *Community health nursing: A Canadian perspective*. Toronto: Pearson-Prentice Hall. (3rd edition).



READ: MacLeod, M., Kulig, J. & Stewart, N. (2019, May 13). Lessons from 20 years of research on nursing practice in rural and remote Canada. *Canadian Nurse*. <https://canadian-nurse.com/en/articles/issues/2019/may-2019/lessons-from-20-years-of-research-on-nursing-practice-in-rural-and-remote-canada>

READ: Jong, M., Mendez, I., & Jong, R. (2019). Enhancing access to care in northern rural communities via telehealth. *International Journal of Circumpolar Health*, 78(2), 1554174. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6508052/>

VIEW VIDEO: Using Tech to Bring Health Care to Rural Communities. <https://youtu.be/uyUu875t9gc>

VIEW VIDEO: Rural Health: Telehealth for MS Patients. <https://youtu.be/C1a5O-1nshl>

VIEW VIDEO: True Stories of the Connected | Rural Healthcare in Northern Canada. https://youtu.be/v_ol8lfNq_E

VIEW VIDEO: Telemedicine: The Future of Medical Care in Rural Communities? <https://youtu.be/NcKMgVCXpJ8>

PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

CCRS Online Course

Complete the *Telehealth Fundamentals Course* (Online) at <https://ccrs.vch.ca/Catalog.aspx?cid=4271>



Take a screen shot of your final results or download the completion certificate if available and upload to your Mahara ePortfolio page for this course.

PRAXIS ACTIVITIES

Rural Nursing and Telehealth VoiceThread

Reflect on the readings and videos. Discuss your ideas in relation to the following questions:



- Why there is such a severe healthcare shortage in rural areas? What factors are contributing to the shortage?
- What can be done to mitigate further healthcare (including nurses) shortage? What incentives are offered or could be offered?
- What are some of the benefits and drawbacks of using telehealth in rural areas?

REFLECTION

Discuss the links between community resiliency and your practice as a rural community health nurse. How can you work with rural community members and telehealth to enhance resiliency?



REFERENCES

CRNBC. (2005). *Telehealth. Practice Standard for Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners*. Vancouver: Author.

Stamler, L. & Yiu, L. (2012). *Community health nursing: A Canadian perspective*. Toronto: Pearson-Prentice Hall. (3rd edition).