



**Department of
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News Release

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VA Data Show Home Health Technology Improves Access to Care *Peake: Entire Health Care System More Effective*

WASHINGTON – Veterans with chronic conditions can manage their health and avoid hospitalization by using special technology provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in their homes, according to a recent study.

“The study showed that home telehealth makes health care more effective because it improves patients’ access to care and is easy to use,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. “A real plus is that this approach to care can be sustained because it’s so cost-effective and more veteran-centric. Patients in rural areas are increasingly finding that telehealth improves their access to health care and promotes their ongoing relationship with our health care system.”

The study found a 25 percent reduction in the average number of days hospitalized and a 19 percent reduction in hospitalizations for patients using home telehealth. The data also show that for some patients the cost of telehealth services in their homes averaged \$1,600 a year – much lower than in-home clinician care costs.

The authors of the study in the current issue of the journal *Telemedicine and e-Health* are VA national telehealth staff members. The study looked at health outcomes from 17,025 VA home telehealth patients.

VA’s home telehealth program cares for 35,000 patients and is the largest of its kind in the world. Clinicians and managers in health care systems, as well as information technology professionals, have been awaiting the results of the telehealth study, said Dr. Adam Darkins, chief consultant in VA’s care coordination program, who led the study.

“The results are not really about the technology, but about how using it helps coordinate the full scope of care our patients need,” said Darkins. “It permits us to give the right care in the right place at the right time.”

Telehealth Study 2/2/2

VA's Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Michael J. Kussman, said the key to the program's success is VA's computerized patient record system. "Data obtained from the home such as blood pressure and blood glucose, along with other patient information in the electronic system, allows our health care teams to anticipate and prevent avoidable problems," he said.

VA health care officials emphasize that home telehealth does not necessarily replace nursing home care or traditional care but can help veterans understand and manage chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and chronic heart failure. Patients' partnership with the medical team can delay the need for institutional care and maintain independence for an extended time.

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