A Phenomenological Study of Telehealth Champions

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Overview

The implementation of telehealth applications is resource intensive and fraught with challenges unique to the people and places involved. According to Zanaboni and Wootton (2012), telehealth applications are reshaping healthcare services through processes and networks that increase access and distribution. Still, the widespread adoption of telehealth applications (clinical, educational and research) is experiencing slow rates of adoption. Research has previously focused on the use of specific technologies, the existing barriers to adoption, and the general efficacy of these applications. Few studies have researched the role champions play in the deployment and operation of telehealth networks.
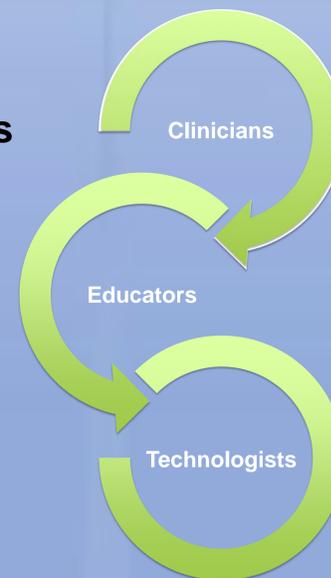
Relevance & Goal

Vuononvirta et al. (2009) cite the "gap between human knowledge and human activity" as an area for future research and application (p. 296). By learning more about the human element responsible for adoption and diffusion within telehealth networks, we are better positioned to translate those elements into new healthcare systems and applications. Examining the lived experiences of telehealth champions should allow us to see how people map out their responses to disruptive technologies and navigate systems of change. This study will involve three distinct disciplines: clinicians, educators and information technologists.

Problem Statement

Due to a lack of published research, the extent to which education specifically impacts telehealth champions is unknown. Additional research is needed to determine themes common to telehealth collaborators as defined by Gantenbein et al. (2011). These themes will hopefully speak to the role of individuals' attitudes and acceptances, the importance of education and training, and the ability of professionals to capitalize on opportunities as part of a team.

Champion Groups

Clinicians

Educators

Technologists

Research Questions

- What do telehealth professionals believe to be the human elements necessary to advance telehealth systems?

- How do these telehealth champions explain their empowerment during the creation and use of telehealth networks?

- How do these professionals use shared processes and experiences to help spur engagement?

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

For this study, the researcher will utilize an *interpretative phenomenological analysis* (IPA) as outlined by Smith et al. (2009). This study will capture the lived experiences of telehealth champions within a statewide network. Through the collection and analysis of interviews conducted with champions, themes will hopefully emerge that speak to the human element, and specifically the individual role of a variety of collaborative personnel in the deployment, adoption and sustainability phases of the telehealth network. Insights into the ways champions strategically overcome barriers and persevere against external issues will be the intended data derived from this research. The timeline for this study will follow an established progression over the next 18 months.

References

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