



1st National Nursing Informatics Conference 2005 Proceedings

Nurses & Informatics: Transforming Healthcare

Sept 14 – 16th, 2005 – University of Toronto, Ontario

CONCURRENT SESSIONS THEME 1: Informatics Innovations in Nursing Practice

**Telehealth and Informed Consent:
Do Patients Need to Sign on the Dotted Line?**

by Jay Lynch, RN, BAdm, MEd

ABSTRACT

Telehealth is the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to deliver health care services and information over distance – great and small. During the past five years, the use of telehealth has grown dramatically in Canada. Many provider organizations now require patients to sign informed consent forms prior to receiving health care services mediated by telehealth technology.

As nurses, we are expected to play an advocacy role in patient care. This includes informing patients of the various alternatives for treatment and relative risks and benefits of each. With the new privacy legislation, we must also take new measures to protect patient information. While obtaining informed consent and protecting confidentiality are not new concepts in health care, what is different is the requirement for patients to provide their signature prior to receiving non-urgent elective health care services. Is this necessary, or, is a patients' presence at a telehealth session a form of implied consent and therefore sufficient?

In this presentation, the author reviews the latest evidence and practices in the use of signed informed consent for telehealth. Reasons for and against obtaining a patient's signature prior to providing non-urgent elective health care services by telehealth are discussed. The discussion concludes with a recommendation for the application of a best practice in informed consent in telehealth.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jay Lynch is a Registered Nurse and Manager of Telehealth & Audiovisual Services at The Ottawa Hospital. During his 20+ years career in nursing, Jay has held both clinical and administrative positions in Canadian teaching hospitals. He obtained his nursing diploma from St. Lawrence College in Kingston, Bachelor of Administration degree from the University of Ottawa and a Masters of Education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Currently, Jay is enrolled in graduate studies in health informatics at the University of Victoria, British Columbia.