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THEME: Realizing Benefits Beyond Institutions

The Integral Role of Nurses in the Ontario Telemedicine Network

By Kathy Crone RN, BSN MA

Abstract

The Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) has been in existence for just over a year, the result of the merger of three successful telemedicine networks in the province. The new Network has enabled continued growth, the delivery of seamless services across Ontario and deeper integration of telemedicine into everyday health care. The result is the largest telemedicine network in Canada and one of the largest in the world. A key success factor for OTN is its extensive collaboration with nursing leaders and professional staff. Innovative solutions are being identified and international best practices are emerging, setting the standard for nursing care in telemedicine.

This session will look at the impact that telemedicine is having beyond the acute care setting, providing case studies of key programs that are ensuring virtual care close to home. Some of these programs include cardiology, mental health and aboriginal health in Northern Ontario. The session will also touch on educational opportunities being offered to disseminate best practices in nursing as OTN enables interaction between virtually every hospital in Ontario. Professional groups have also been able to meet via real-time videoconferencing, eliminating extensive travel time, cost and care reduction. Educational institutions are also on board, exponentially changing the future of educational opportunities for nurses.

A review of lessons learned, processes undertaken, and the role of nurses in the creation of a large-scale and unique telemedicine network will provide valuable insights for professionals looking to grow and mainstream their own services.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kathy Crone RN, BSN MA

Kathy Crone is Regional Vice President, Clinical, Education and Training Programs with the Ontario Telemedicine Network. Over the past two decades, Ms. Crone has held numerous positions in the clinical setting with a focus on Paediatrics, Oncology and Adult Cardiology. Following her clinical career, Ms. Crone was responsible for initiatives such as Sharpening our Focus on Patients and Families, disaster planning, work redesign, workload measurement and telehealth at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. For the past six years, Ms. Crone has led the development of telehealth in eastern Ontario, first as Project Manager of the Eastern Ontario Telehealth Network and then as Executive Director of CareConnect. Ms. Crone has undergraduate degrees in Nursing and Education and a Masters Degree in Education (Administration).