**The Transformative Role of Electronic Health Records (EHRs) and Communication Technologies in Enhancing Patient Care and Bridging Healthcare Disparities**



Integrating technology has reshaped how patient care is delivered and managed in the rapidly evolving healthcare landscape. Electronic Health Records (EHRs) and communication technologies have emerged as powerful tools that address gaps and inefficiencies in patient care. They are pivotal in engaging patients in their care and fostering solid nurse-patient relationships. Furthermore, the potential of communication technologies, such as mobile health applications (apps), in delivering safe nursing care to diverse populations must be recognised. This essay explores the multifaceted impacts of Electronic Health Records {EHRs} on patient care and the nurse-patient relationship, then examines the potential of mobile health apps to bridge healthcare disparities in different settings, focusing on a strategy to reduce digital access inequities.

**Impact of  Electronic Health Records on Patient Care**

Electronic Health Records (EHRs) have revolutionised the healthcare landscape by addressing various patient care needs, gaps, and inefficiencies. One of the primary impacts of EHRs is their ability to provide comprehensive and easily accessible patient information. This addresses the longstanding challenge of fragmented medical records and enhances the continuity of care. Healthcare providers can now access a patient's medical history, laboratory results, medications, and treatment plans in real time, leading to more informed clinical decisions and reduced medical errors.

Moreover, EHRs contribute to efficient care coordination, bridging gaps between healthcare settings and providers. Unified information sharing diminishes the likelihood of missed diagnoses and treatments, ultimately improving patient outcomes. Electronic Health Records also rationalise administrative processes, reducing paperwork and administrative burdens on healthcare specialists, which enables them to bestow more time to direct enduring care.

**Engaging Patients through Electronic Health Records as Communication Technology**

https://youtu.be/UuTFUFKrznA

EHRs are a communication technology that engages patients in their care and strengthens the nurse-patient association. Patient portals embedded within EHR systems empower individuals to access their health information, including lab results, medications, and care plans. This access fosters patient autonomy and enables them to take an active role in handling their health. Patients can review their medical records, ask questions, and make more informed decisions with their healthcare providers.

Electronic Health Records further enrich the nurse-patient relationship by facilitating secure communication channels. Nurses can communicate with patients, addressing their queries, concerns, and educational needs. This virtual dialogue enhances patient satisfaction, improves adherence to treatment plans, and supports a patient-centred approach to care. Additionally, Electronic Health Records allow nurses to create personalised care plans that patients can access remotely. This encourages self-management and strengthens the partnership between nurses and patients, fostering trust and collaboration.

**Communication Technologies and Diverse Populations**

In a diverse healthcare landscape, communication technologies hold immense potential for delivering safe nursing care to various populations spanning large metropolitan areas and rural settings. However, the implementation and impact of these technologies can differ significantly based on the context.

**Large Metropolitan Area**

Communication technologies, chiefly mobile health apps, are well-suited for large municipal areas due to their widespread digital infrastructure and connectivity. These apps can provide various services, including appointment scheduling, medication reminders, and health tracking. In a metropolitan setting, mobile health apps can enhance convenience and accessibility, enabling patients to involve with their care seamlessly and plummeting the need for in-person visits for monotonous matters.

***Rural Area***

In contrast, rural areas often face digital access and healthcare infrastructure challenges. However, communication technologies still hold promise in bridging healthcare disparities. Mobile health apps can be customised to provide indispensable health information, preventive care tips, and educational resources tailored to the needs of the local population. These apps can facilitate virtual consultations between patients and healthcare providers, enabling timely interventions and reducing the need for patients to travel long distances for routine care.

***Reducing Digital Access Inequities: The Community Health Information Center (CHIC) Strategy***

To address digital access inequities and ensure that underserved populations can benefit from communication technologies, a strategy known as Community Health Information Centers (CHICs) can be implemented. CHICs would establish physical access points armed with computers, tablets, and internet connectivity in public centres, libraries, or healthcare facilities in rural areas. Skilled staff or volunteers at CHICs would provide technology training and support to patients, particularly those with limited digital literacy.

CHICs would curate culturally sensitive and easy-to-understand educational resources through digital platforms, ensuring patients can access reliable health information. These centres would also facilitate virtual consultations between patients and healthcare providers, enabling personalised care delivery even in areas with limited access to healthcare facilities. In collaboration with local healthcare providers and community organisations, CHICs would promote awareness and encourage the utilisation of communication technologies for improved health outcomes.

Conclusion

Electronic Health Records  Electronic Health Records have revolutionised patient care by addressing needs, gaps, and inefficiencies, facilitating patient engagement and supporting the nurse-patient relationship. Communication technologies, particularly mobile health apps, hold the potential to bridge healthcare disparities in diverse settings, catering to both metropolitan and rural populations. Implementing strategies like Community Health Information Centers (CHICs) can effectively reduce digital access inequities, ensuring that all patients, regardless of geographic location, have access to vital healthcare information and safe nursing care. As technology continues to evolve, its integration into healthcare systems remains critical for enhancing patient outcomes and promoting equity in healthcare delivery.

References

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