

Tele-ICUs: Nurses' Views



In the U.S., results of a national survey show that telemedicine can improve ICU patient care. More than 75 percent of tele-ICU nurses responding to the survey said that telemedicine offers an opportunity to improve patient care and that it is useful in their job, according to the results published in the *American Journal of Critical Care (AJCC)*.

The online survey was conducted to identify barriers and benefits to telemedicine with respect to nursing care. The two-phase study also assessed priority areas of care for tele-ICU nurses to form the foundation for developing competencies for tele-ICU nursing.

A total of 1,213 nurses responded to the initial online survey, three-quarters of whom were hospital-based bedside nurses who interface with a tele-ICU. Another 13 percent were nurses who work in a remote tele-ICU location, and about 10 percent were nurses who work in both capacities.

A majority of respondents also reported that tele-ICUs improve collaboration, job performance and communication, as well as being useful in nursing assessments and allowing bedside nurses more time for patient care.

"The majority of participants thought that tele-ICUs enhanced patient care, improved productivity and collaboration and made their job easier," says lead author Ruth Kleinpell, RN, PhD, APRN-BC, CCRN, who directs the Center for Clinical Research at Rush University Medical Center, Chicago. "This growing subspecialty of critical care nursing has tremendous potential to affect patients, patients' families and the entire healthcare team."

Critical care nurses cite these key benefits to using tele-ICU systems: monitor trends in vital signs, detect unstable physiological status, detect arrhythmias, prevent self-extubation, and prevent falls.

Participants also identified barriers related to tele-ICUs, including technical problems (audio and video), interrupting care, perceptions of telemedicine as an interference, and attitudes of ICU staff.

During the second part of the study, 60 respondents developed a ranked list of 15 priority areas of care for tele-ICU nursing. Critical thinking skills, ICU experience, skilful communication, mutual respect and emergency patient care management were ranked as the most important abilities overall.

According to the study, the U.S. has approximately 45 tele-ICUs with monitoring capacity for more than 6,000 patients at over 200 hospitals, impacting care for an estimated 12 percent of ICU patients in the country. Between 800 and 1,000 nurses currently practice in tele-ICUs, interfacing from remote monitoring sites with another 16,000 staff nurses who are at the bedside.

Source: [American Association of Critical-Care Nurses](#)

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