2013 FPTA Annual Conference

Are You Ready for Telehealth? The basics and then some.
Friday, September 27 from 8:30 – 12:00 pm

This course on telehealth will take you through the basics, demonstrate advances and opportunities, and discuss regulatory and payment issues related to clinical practice of the physical therapist. Telehealth can be used in physical therapist practice across multiple settings and geographic locations. The primary goal of this session is to demystify the use of telehealth and offer practical ideas for how it can be integrated into the clinical setting. This will include identifying barriers and develop strategies for practical application of telehealth services that are consumer directed in physical therapy. We aim to make this information both exciting and obviously applicable along the continuum of care with ethical views of how technology may enhance physical therapy care for future generations.

History of Telehealth
What is Telehealth:

- American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) defines telehealth as the use of electronic communications to provide and deliver a host of health-related information and health care services, including, but not limited to, physical therapy related information and services, over large and small distances. Telehealth may be used to provide health education and advice, communicate patient reminders, monitor clinical status, or deliver interventions. (Accessed 9/12/13).

- American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) defines telerehabilitation in the larger realm of telehealth as the application of communication technology for supporting rehabilitation services. (Accessed 9/12/13).

- American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA), “Telepractice is the application of telecommunications technology to the delivery of speech language pathology and audiology professional services at a distance by linking clinician to client/patient or clinician to clinician for assessment, intervention, and/or consultation.” (Accessed 9/12/13).

APTA’s Discussion: Physical Therapy and Society Summit (PASS)
Imagination. Inspiration. Innovation. That's what the Physical Therapy and Society Summit (PASS), a first-of-its-kind event for APTA and the physical therapy profession held in February 2009, was all about.

Frontiers in Rehabilitation Science and Technology (FiRST)
- Telehealth
- Robotics
- Regenerative rehabilitation
- Genetics
Why Telehealth
The complex US health care system is under a tremendous amount of pressure. Many traditional health care business models are designed to allow high-volume, low-cost procedures to offset the costs of low-volume, high-cost procedures. An upward shift in the aging population is projected to result in a large increase in demand for health care, and new legislation such as the Affordable Care Act has added uncertainty to the future of health care business models and payment.

Traditionally, telehealth has been advocated as a solution largely for rural health care; however, as we move forward this is likely to broaden. Recent technological innovations, legislative laws and health care consumerism may encourage telehealth adoption. For example, federal broadband initiatives combined with mobile industry technologies may provide cost effective options for appointment visits in the digital age. Busy lifestyles also often make it difficult for health care consumers to attend traditional appointments.

In physical therapy, our patients are often asking us to provide them with more time-efficient and less costly care models. Technological advancements have given us the tools to deliver telehealth services more readily than ever. In 2012 over 300,000 patients used various forms of telehealth for chronic disease monitoring alone. Worldwide telehealth is projected to grow to 1.8 million users by 2017, according to the World Market of Telehealth. (resource - http://www.healthcareitnews.com/news/telehealth-growth-mode-worldwide)

Examples of telehealth
Clinical practice examples types and settings:
  Types:
    Store and forward
    Consultation
    Screening
    Intervention
  Settings:
    Clinic
    Hospital
    Military: In the field
    Home Health
    Research

APTA Podcast Series
North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health
Post-stroke Hand Mentor Trail Now offered at Emory

Research
Telehealth Legislation and Regulation
State PT statutes govern the licensed practice of physical therapy, and may impact activities related to research and education. Legislation that specifically addresses telehealth in physical therapist practice is sparse but gaining momentum. Important legislation has been developed that supports telehealth in other areas of medicine such as teleradiology and telepsychology. While telehealth should be viewed simply as an additional method of delivering services, depending on your state, legislation or board regulations may need to be in place before providers can begin practicing telehealth. American Physical Therapy Association supported the Medicare Telehealth Enhancement Act of 2009 (H.R. 2068) to allow quality healthcare services more accessible and available for our nation. At the state level, the California Physical Therapy Association’s Government Affairs Committee supported the Telehealth Advancement Act of 2011 (A.B. 415).

Telehealth Billing and Coding
Billing physical therapy services that have been provided through telehealth is an emerging challenge, partly because there are as of yet few precedents on which to base claims review. As more PTs use and bill for telehealth, payers will become more familiar and comfortable with negotiating rates for telehealth services.

Conclusion
Telehealth opportunity in therapy can enhance access to service and address provider shortage in certain settings. As adoption of technology is destined to increase, therapists should collaborate with providers in medicine, nursing, rehabilitation engineering, and allied health to generate telehealth research, practice, and education. In Australia, Russell noted a failure to integrate telehealth into routine clinical practice as the evidence emerges would constitute a grave disservice to clients. (Russell TG. Telerehabilitation: a coming of age [editorial]. Aust J Physiother. 2009;55:5-6.)

Additional Resources:

2003 Telehealth Reimbursement report
http://www.hrsa.gov/ruralhealth/about/telehealth/reimburse.pdf

CMS Rural Telehealth Fact Sheet
State Telehealth Laws and Reimbursement policies
http://cchpca.org/node/5280

Center for Connected Health Policy
http://cchpca.org/

Telehealth: Real Life Implementation Issues

Delivering the Physical Therapy Value Proposition: a Call to Action
http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23001526h

How to Get Started: Telemedicine Training, Telehealth Services (includes other medical disciplines but provides helpful information for physical therapists)
http://www.globalmed.com/training-education/how-to-get-started.php

Northeast Telehealth Resource Center

Utah Telehealth Network
http://www.utahtelehealth.net/training/Training%20Materials.html

ATA

Health IT.gov

Speakers for the course:

Matt Elrod, PT, DPT, MEd, NCS
< mattelrod@apta.org>
Sandy Davis, PT
< don_sandy@cox.net >
Keith Myers PT, MBA
< Keith.Myers2@va.gov >