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Conference Abstract

## **Nurses' attitudes towards telehealth: the Royal College of Nursing eHealth survey**

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### **Abstract**

**Introduction:** The mainstreaming of telehealth services is dependent largely on the engagement of clinical staff. As the largest professional group of healthcare providers, nurses have a vital role to play in ensuring the success of telehealth deployments.

In the UK, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has endeavoured to discover more about nurses' knowledge and attitudes of telehealth through its eHealth survey. The survey has been completed on four occasions since 2004, though it is only in 2010 and 2012 that there has been any reference to telehealth. This paper describes changes in patterns and responses between the 2010 and 2012 surveys.

**Aims and objectives;** The project aimed to:

- Quantify the level of awareness and experience that nurses have regarding telehealth
- Gauge the attitudes of nurses towards telehealth
- Identify any changes in awareness and attitudes between 2010 and 2012

**Methods:** In 2010 and 2012, RCN members from across all UK countries and regions were invited to participate in the RCN eHealth survey. Both surveys were completed by respondents online.

Respondents were asked about their awareness, experience and attitudes towards using eHealth in practice. The surveys sought feedback on a range of eHealth issues, such as Information Technology training and the use of Clinical Information Systems. The paper addresses only those elements of the survey focused upon telehealth.

**Results:** 1313 nurses completed the survey in 2010, compared to 1022 in 2012. Awareness of telehealth has increased between the two surveys; 63% of respondents in 2012 had heard of telehealth, an increase from 55% in 2010. Experience of having used telehealth has not increased over time: 15% of respondents in both surveys reported previous experience of using telehealth to support their practice.

Respondents were asked whether they welcomed the introduction of telehealth into nursing practice. The proportion responding positively to this question fell between 2010 and 2012 (56% vs. 43%), largely as a result of an increase in the number of people replying that they ‘don’t know’ (45% in 2012 vs. 34% in 2010). Notably, the proportion who welcomed the introduction of telehealth in the 2012 survey was substantially higher in those who had previous experience of telehealth than in those who didn’t (80% vs. 38%)

Attitudes towards telehealth were also explored in both surveys and demonstrated some changes over time. Though the proportion who agreed that telehealth could enhance the care of chronic conditions remained largely unchanged (43% in 2010 vs. 41% in 2012), a smaller proportion of 2012 respondents agreed that telehealth could facilitate earlier intervention (41% in 2012 vs. 49% in 2010) or support self-management by patients (42% in 2012 vs. 48% in 2010).

**Conclusions:** The RCN eHealth surveys of 2010 and 2012 demonstrate that awareness of telehealth amongst nurses is rising. However, there has been no increase in the proportion of nurses reporting hands-on experience of telehealth and attitudes toward the service have become less positive. More work is required to enhance the awareness, knowledge and understanding of the benefits that telehealth can bring to nursing practice.

### **Keywords:**

**telehealth, nursing, ehealth, workforce development**

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