Media information
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Telehealth is taking off in East Ayrshire
Self-management week 28 September – 2 October 2015

Patients in East Ayrshire are continuing to reap the benefits of telehealth as the use of the technology continues to grow.

NHS Ayrshire & Arran began its telehealth programme in 2011. Telehealth allows patients with long-term conditions such as Chronic Heart Failure (CHF), Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and Diabetes to monitor and self-manage their condition at home, reducing the need to be admitted into hospital.

Patients have a small touch screen device, called a pod (similar to a tablet or smartphone), that asks them simple questions about how they feel. It can also take vital signs information such as blood pressure, oxygen saturation and weight and contains the patient’s individual self-management plan.

Patients are then able to self-manage their condition according to their results - for example, if a patient’s blood pressure is slightly elevated, the test alerts them to take extra medication.

The results are also uploaded for review by advanced nurse practitioners and specialist nurses who work directly with family doctors (GPs) and other services. If results are found to be concerning, the team make contact with the patient and arrange for the appropriate support or care to be provided.
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One patient who has benefited from telehealth is Mr John Littlejohn from Cumnock in East Ayrshire.

Mr Littlejohn was diagnosed with CHF and during 2014 had to be admitted into hospital five times. He was referred to the CHF Specialist Nurse Service within East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership at University Hospital Crosshouse.

Through this service, Mr Littlejohn was offered telehealth to help him to monitor and manage his condition.

Mr Littlejohn said: “I had never heard of telehealth or home health monitoring before the nurse spoke to me about it. At first I was a little panicked about the idea of using computers. But when the technician arrived and showed me how to use the pod, I felt reassured. Now the equipment is so easy to use it is like second nature to me.

“I need my bloods taken every two weeks. But because my nurse can see the results using this equipment, I can go to East Ayrshire Community Hospital to do this if my nurse doesn’t need to see me for anything else.

“I don’t have to see my GP as much either. He is quite happy to let my cardiac nurse deal with my results”.

Mr Littlejohn is due to see the consultant at University Hospital Ayr in October and added: “I quite often have to go on the waiting list to wear a 24-hour heart monitor after this appointment, however this time I am going to take my pod along with me to show the consultant my results in graphs meaning I won’t need to go on the waiting list”.

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To find out more about self-management of conditions, visit My East Ayrshire at http://www.my-east-ayrshire.co.uk/ or Living it Up at https://portal.livingitup.org.uk/.
Living it Up is an award winning self-management hub which empowers people aged 50 and over to use technology to manage their health and wellbeing and to be better connected to their communities.

Ends

Date of release: 23 September 2015

Photograph: 240915telehealthEA(6): Mr John Littlejohn of Cumnock pictured using his home pod.

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