

Telenursing in patient–nurse communication – Challenge to patient safety?

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

Telenursing is an essential component of patient care, and in future it might be increasingly used among nurses. More and more people have possibilities to communicate by electronic mail or by videophone with healthcare professionals. However, the use of telenursing may involve challenges related to patient safety.

Methods and materials

The aim of the study was to identify components of the challenges to patient safety in the use of telenursing applications. We carried out a literature review of nurses' point of view in spring 2011. We searched three databases (Medline/Pubmed, Cinahl, Medic) using keywords related to the specific database. In the literature search revealed 281 studies. The titles and abstracts were manually reviewed, and 27 studies were finally approved for the review.

Challenges to patient safety

Three components related to patient safety were found:

- 1) Challenges to technology; disturbing factors in operational environment, problems with technology or instruments, lack of instructions, inability to identify communication partner
- 2) Challenges to the content of information; unclear instructions, lack of common understanding
- 3) Challenges to use of information; lack of assessment of the impacts of patient education

Conclusion

In future, technology must be developed so that applications will allow confirming the identity of the communication partner and ensure good connection. Nurses' ability to recognize problems must also be strengthened.