

REPORT: PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS MAY LIMIT OLDER AMERICANS' ADOPTION OF TELEMEDICINE SERVICES BUT OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND FOR GREATER PATIENT EDUCATION

Additional Research on Seniors' Attitudes Toward Health Technologies is Critical to Improving Home Monitoring Use

WASHINGTON, D.C.//February 26, 2007//Concerns held by older Americans regarding telemedicine services, including fear of reduced social interaction and strong desires to protect personal information, are under-scrutinized in telemedicine research. Experts indicate that further study of older patient perceptions of telehealth applications may yield important lessons for doctors and providers; increasing awareness of telemedicine benefits may encourage seniors to more widely adopt new home-based health technologies, according to a new report by the New Millennium Research Council (NMRC). The report is available at www.thenmrc.org.

Entitled “*Overcoming the Psychological Barriers to Telemedicine: Empowering Older Americans to Use Remote Health Monitoring Services*,” the new NMRC report presents source materials to showcase a compelling snapshot of older Americans’ feelings about using telemedicine equipment in the home. There is evidence throughout the relevant e-health literature that older Americans’ fear losing longstanding relationships with their doctors if they use home-based telemedicine services and have hesitations about using new technology. The NMRC report finds that with the more technology-savvy Baby Boomer generation nearing retirement age, telemedicine use may increase in the near future.

“This new report offers readers important information on the under-publicized psychological barriers seniors exhibit to telemedicine and chronicles methods to help older Americans overcome these fears. We need to ask and better answer key questions about why older Americans are not yet fully embracing telemedicine applications, rather than focusing solely on policy and technical issues,” said Matt Bennett, Executive Director of the New Millennium Research Council.

The concerns of older patients regarding technology, coupled with complex e-health public policy issues such as reimbursement and licensing, may factor greatly in the relatively limited use of telemedicine services by older Americans. Research cited in the report shows that in addition to crafting new public policies, greater knowledge of the effects of home monitoring technology on older adults may be a key to expanding use. Additional insights into patient fears will provide doctors and manufacturers with new ideas about adapting technologies to improve patient receptiveness. Other possible avenues identified by experts to help older Americans embrace telemedicine include peer support groups and tailored training programs to help them become more comfortable with technology. Such programs can “boost confidence” in seniors’ ability to use telemedicine technologies and “reduce complexity” of telemedicine systems for consumers.

ABOUT NMRC

Created in 1999, the New Millennium Research Council (NMRC) is a Washington, D.C. based think tank. Contributors develop workable, real-world solutions to the issues and challenges confronting policymakers. Its work has focused primarily in the fields of telecommunications and technology. For more information on the NMRC please visit: www.thenmrc.org.

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