

Newham WSD TeleHealth: Improving quality of life at home

Newham residents with long term health conditions such as 65-year-old diabetic Terry Munro, are being assisted to live in their own homes, thanks to the help of new health technology in the home.

Every morning at 6.30am, Terry – who has been trialling the TeleHealth system for the past six months – takes his blood pressure, weight, pulse and blood sugar levels. The readings are taken with special equipment which is linked to a set-top box connected to his television. The results, shown to Terry on his television, are then automatically uploaded to a team of healthcare professionals who view them daily – this way his health can be effectively managed. If any abnormalities are highlighted, immediate action can be taken.

On the effect TeleHealth is having on his life, Terry said: “I have much greater peace of mind about my condition now. As soon as anything changes I know I’ll be contacted by someone in my care team to check up on me.”

TeleHealth has greatly increased Terry’s independence, because living alone with diabetes has always been a concern for him in case he ever fell into a diabetic coma with no-one around. But now with the TeleHealth system he can see for himself what his readings are and take necessary steps to avoid an emergency situation.

For instance, Terry was contacted by a community nurse one morning after his usual readings showed his blood sugar was very low (which was due to him having little for dinner the previous evening). The nurse was able to advise Terry about the need for him to eat regularly.

“The TeleHealth system also gives me an incentive to keep fit and follow a healthy eating plan, especially as I am able to see my weight over time. I walk more regularly now instead of taking the bus,” he said.

Terry can also receive messages from his nurses and download videos on his condition, as well as general advice on healthy living.

Terry is now playing a much more active role in the management of his own health and is more conscious of his lifestyle habits. He has increased confidence because help and advice is just a remote-control-button or phone call away.

With the number of people living with a long term condition expected to reach 18 million by 2025¹ and expenditure on care set to double in the next 15 years, it is important that new technologies and care models are researched and introduced, to enable individuals to continue living independently whilst ensuring they receive the appropriate level of care.

For more information on the WSD Trial call 020 8430 6392 or go to www.NewhamWSDTrial.org

For further information on case studies or to arrange an interview please contact:

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¹ {Department of Health, Raising the Profile of Long Term Conditions Care, *NHS Gateway Ref.8734, January 2008*}

About the Whole System Demonstrator (WSD)

The Newham Council together with the Primary Care Trust are undertaking a two-year Department of Health funded research project – the WSD TeleHealth and TeleCare trial - to find out how technology in the home can help people manage their own health while maintaining their independence.

Newham Council and Primary Care Trust were successful in their bid to become one of three sites to take part. Around 2,000 local people will participate and have the opportunity of using either the TeleCare or TeleHealth systems in their home. TeleHealth is aimed at people with long term health conditions such as diabetes, heart failure and/or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Those who fulfil the trial criteria for TeleHealth should have received a letter from their GP asking them to participate.

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