



SKILLED HOME HEALTH

Helping Patients Manage Chronic Conditions at Home

BY NIKI ANDERSON

Chronic conditions are among the most prevalent and costly medical issues facing Americans. Nearly half of all U.S. adults have a chronic condition, and one in four has two or more. For those over 65, the numbers only grow. Common chronic conditions include heart disease, COPD, and diabetes. Those suffering from chronic conditions are the most frequent users of healthcare, accounting for over 80 percent of hospital admissions and a third of healthcare spending in the country.

Chronic disease management programs can help patients achieve better health outcomes and increase their quality of life as well as lower healthcare spending.

The goal of these programs is to help patients self-manage their illness, allowing for better health outcomes as well as reducing hospital admissions, readmissions, and emergency room visits related to their diagnosis.

Telehealth technology can also support patients managing health conditions at home. Telehealth, or home telemonitoring, helps patients with chronic conditions by providing a consistent connection to healthcare professionals who can intervene before a small change becomes a big problem. Telehealth solutions offer devices and software that consistently and accurately manage patient vital signs in

the home. Patients living with a variety of conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, COPD, and hypertension, can benefit from the daily monitoring that telehealth services provide.

As part of daily monitoring, patients complete a set of questions customized to their health condition. Healthcare providers receive vital-sign data and interview responses. If the data is outside established limits for the patient, the telehealth system alerts the healthcare provider. These alerts allow for early interventions and treatment adjustments before a more significant health event occurs, such as emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

Additional benefits of this consistent monitoring are a comprehensive view of how well a patient's condition is being managed and objective measures of how effective a treatment is over time.

Today, more than 90 percent of adults over 65 live independently, and most would prefer to remain at home if they're able. Services like chronic disease management and home telemonitoring programs can help make that happen for those living with chronic conditions.

Home health services have one goal—to help patients remain at home. They assist people in recovering from illness or injury or healing from surgery to recover at home, and specialty programs can be designed to help those living with a chronic condition better manage their illness to remain as healthy as possible at home.

Niki Anderson is a marketing and communications specialist at SSM Health at Home.



SSM Health at Home nurses are certified by the National Association of Home Care & Hospice in chronic disease management. Our nurses receive training that includes education on adult learning, health literacy, and behavioral techniques. While providing skilled care for those with chronic conditions, SSM Health at Home's care team uses this training to educate patients on their condition(s) and treatment(s), helps them set their own health goals, and increases their confidence in self-management of their conditions.

SSM Health at Home also offers home telemonitoring for patients with certain diagnoses who meet specified criteria. Telehealth patients are provided in-home monitors and a personalized program to monitor their condition and help them to follow their prescribed plan of care.

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