Home-based Cardiac Rehabilitation for Veterans
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Access to Cardiac Rehab

Access to cardiac rehabilitation (CR) is limited for many Veterans who use Veterans Affairs Health Care Systems, Medical Centers, or Clinics. Very few offer on-site cardiac rehabilitation services. The Veterans Affairs (VA) pays for cardiac rehab services offered in non-VA settings, however, attendance barriers often prevent Veterans from attending traditional cardiac rehabilitation programs. The 2011 ACC/AHA guidelines for secondary prevention of coronary artery disease state that home-based CR can be substituted for a center based program. A home-based cardiac rehabilitation program funded by the VA Office of Rural Health was successfully implemented and evaluated at the Iowa City VA Health Care System demonstrating a cost effective, safe, and comparable option for cardiac rehab services.

Home-based Cardiac Rehab Model

- Eligible Veterans are enrolled face-to-face or tele video assessment.
  - Patients are provided a blood pressure cuff, educational workbook, pedometer, resistance bands, and exercise peddler.
  - 12 consecutive weekly appointments by telephone or clinical video telehealth to home
  - Individualized heart healthy lifestyle consultation by a cardiac rehab provider includes:
    - Tailored exercise prescription
    - Heart healthy nutrition counseling
    - Tobacco Cessation
    - Medication adherence
    - Stress management
  - Veterans receive follow-up appointments at 3, 6, and 12 month following completion of the program.

Why Sites Participate

- No on-site cardiac rehabilitation services
- Veteran barriers to center-based cardiac rehabilitation
  - Geographic location/ distance to travel
  - Finances
  - Employment
  - Personal obligations
  - Other health reasons
- Expansion of cardiac rehab services (Center based and Home-based)
- Continuation of care following traditional center-based

Dissemination

Following successfully implementation at the Iowa City VA the Home-based Cardiac Rehab Program has been disseminated to additional VA facilities across the country. Each medical facility receives guidance and counseling on the implementation process from the Iowa City Health Care System’s Home-based Cardiac Rehab Program Staff. This includes; monthly meetings, email and phone correspondence, annual training, and program tool kit materials for the providers and patients.

Currently, 29 VA medical facilities offer the Home-based Cardiac Rehab Program.
- 3 of these VA facilities are served by a hub & spoke model, where well established VA Home-based Cardiac Rehab Programs can provide cardiac rehab services to the patients at another VA facility within their Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN).

Continued Evaluation & Growth

- An original evaluation in 2011 demonstrated successful implementation.
- Currently a three year evaluation is wrapping up on identifying the barriers, facilitators, local adaptations, and utilization of the home-based cardiac rehab program.
- Planned expansion to additional VA medical facilities in FY18
- Additional cost comparison evaluation
- Pilot of our Home-based Pulmonary Rehabilitation Model at 2 VA facilities

Conclusions

- Home-based models have been shown to be effective and included in current recommendations by the ACC/AHA.
- The Home-based Cardiac Rehab Model for Veterans has become an additional option and/or serves as an adjunct to existing cardiac rehab services for many VA facilities.
- The Home-based CR Program has been adapted to fit small rural and large urban facilities.
- The Home-based CR Program brings care closer to the Veteran, improving access to cardiac rehab services and focusing on patients’ choice.
- With continued evaluation & expansion best practices will be identified with continued dissemination of this model.

Impact

Over 1600 Veterans have been served by the Program

“A great program because of the distance I would have had to travel to a facility for rehab. I liked that we could schedule what worked best for me.”
-Participant

“Positive interaction, a level of trust that isn’t always felt for Veterans. Personal interaction, I looked forward to the call, felt comparable sharing information and no pressure. Felt more like therapy.”
-Participant

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