

Editorial

TELEHEALTH AS A STRATEGY FOR HEALTHCARE DEVELOPMENT

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2010) understands telehealth as the provision of health services, whenever distance is a critical factor. It relies on information technology and communication, emphasizing diagnosis, treatment, prevention of diseases and the improvement of health outcomes in a population.

In Brazil, the benchmark for the development of telehealth occurred in 2007, with the implementation of nine centers at different universities in the country. This was followed, in 2011, by the expansion and redefinition of the proposal through the Brazil Networks National Telehealth Program whose main service includes teleconsulting, strategies for tele-education and telediagnostic activities as well as second formative opinion (Brazil, 2011).

So far, promising results have been described in the fields of medicine, dentistry and nursing, especially with respect to reducing unnecessary users' referrals to major centers (Dias de Castro Filho, 2011). In this perspective, telehealth, more than just a technological resource with the aim of carrying out distance activities, expands its range of action when associated with strategies that develop health care networks.

However, it is necessary to consider the need for the training of health professionals using digital media, since the difficulty of management of available resources can limit access to these tools and, consequently, decrease the impact of telehealth on health indicators.

Ultimately, telehealth appears as an innovative experience that seeks to develop health care while rationalizing the available human and physical resources and reducing costs in order to improve the quality of life of the population.

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