


Chapter 2

Telenutrition: The Fine Line Between Nutritional Coaching and an Effective Professional Practice

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ABSTRACT

In the last 20 years, telenutrition has gained popularity and visibility. This term refers to the incorporation of tools and skills of telecommunication into nutritional management. Telenutrition already had many reported uses even before the COVID-19 pandemic. In the present chapter, Telenutrition will be addressed considering important aspects such as differences with traditional care, the most relevant findings in pathologies relevant to the area, some suggestions for tools and marketing, as well as some ethical aspects.

INTRODUCTION

The pandemic caused by Covid-19 generated a series of restrictions in countries (like the maintenance of health distance; avoid crowds; do not greet with a kiss and hand; etc.), the complete closure of any non-urgent work and commercial activity; besides to medical institutions at maximum limit forced them to modify their clinical practice in most health sciences. Telemedicine was a perfect alternative to treat the patients in the distance; in this sense, Telenutrition gained strength. Therefore, this chapter aims to analyze the practice of Telenutrition, its characteristics, its main uses, and recommendations for its proper employment, emphasizing the ethical approach in its practice. The present chapter is a good alternative

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8783-6.ch002

for consultation, which will be useful for students, teachers of undergraduate programs in Nutrition, and health professionals in the field of Nutrition.

BACKGROUND

In contrast with another health science practice, where the Covid-19 substantially increases remote consultation evidence, Telenutrition shows sustained growth practice from the late 90s. In those studies, (Cline & Wong 1999), they showed the impact of Telenutrition on weight loss, it was shown as a very promising alternative for the future, which gave the patient the comfort of being from home, with the possibility of improving openness in a reliable environment that promoted nutritional education, greater follow-up, and a closer accompaniment for those patients who required it. Since then, various studies on Telenutrition began to appear, but in 2015, the number of publications per year began to rise. This could be related to the increase in the prevalence of various metabolic diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and metabolic syndrome (Saklayen, 2018). Most of the studies are focused on weight loss, however other contexts analyzed with Telenutrition are type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and also in chronic kidney disease. In most of these studies, the interventions range from the assessment completely online, to various digital media such as specialized platforms, e-mail, social networks, or smartphone apps. As already mentioned, there are various proposals where Telenutrition is used for the management of several diseases or the promotion of healthy lifestyles, however, the documents are isolated, very focused on each of the diseases, there is no review that makes a consensus of all the information. differences between telemedicine and face-to-face care. Throughout the chapter, these uses will be deepened and broken down for the reader to reach a better conclusion about the use of Telenutrition, and if he is determined to use it, he will be able to have a guide to its correct use.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Telenutrition has been growing in the last twenty years, being used more and more and even being something common; making it clear that Telenutrition did not come with the Covid-19 pandemic, but that it has been evolving in recent years. This increase may be related to the use of technology, constant improvements in telecommunications, without neglecting that we live in a globalized world. Telenutrition has already reached us, and for Nutrition professionals to become more competitive, adapt to new ways of communicating, and acquire tools that favor a better relationship with patients/clients, it is necessary to have a guide to how it works. This chapter will discuss the main uses, the differences in patient management, and the recommendations of some tools, marketing use, and the non-recommended aspects, which will be analyzed, ending with the ethical aspect for a better understanding and correct use of Telenutrition.

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