

# What is telemedicine



Inadequate access to medical resources and expertise by certain segments of the population. Continuing increases in the cost of medical care despite new business models and dramatic cost-cutting programs. Through the use of telecommunications technologies and computer networking, telemedicine extends the reach of medical personnel over geographic areas and improves access to medical care. One impact of telemedicine will be to democratize the future of medicine.

In effect, telemedicine will facilitate the involvement of patients in their own health and medical care to an extent never before imagined. The advent of high-definition television, broad bandwidth, high-speed transmission rates, and reliable low-cost devices for collecting bio data in the home will allow medical professionals to conduct triage, diagnostic consultations, and remote follow-up treatment with patients, as well as provide guidance to home caregivers.

Interactive communications will allow patients and care provider's access to information, advice, and guidance to improve home-based care. The danger, however, is that the potential benefits of telemedicine could be lost if the users—professional and, especially, nonprofessional—cannot easily and effectively use such systems to meet their needs. The discipline of human factors and ergonomics can play an important role in making telemedicine a successful part of the medical industry.