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# Telemedicine Distance Mentoring of Healthcare Students

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The healthcare system is facing a challenge similar to other industries in maintaining an adequately trained home care workforce in a time when government funding for educational geriatrics programs is limited, and academic centers are emphasizing faculty productivity that may limit their time dedicated to teaching and training healthcare students. Telemedicine presents an opportunity to study its educational potential using limited faculty resources. Has telemedicine advanced enough technologically to be appropriate for teaching skills needed to obtain a history and perform a physical examination on the elderly who choose to remain living in the community? We used telemedicine instruments to enable faculty to study the potential for teaching students the skills needed to perform a history and physical examination in an elderly person. The distance mentoring study was designed as a pilot-based on limited faculty time available to determine the effectiveness of teaching students using telemedicine. Students were also surveyed regarding the experience of visiting an independent living facility and about the reliability and their level of comfort using telemedicine. Most students found telemedicine to be reliable, most gained confidence and an acceptable level of comfort using telemedicine instruments to interact with elderly volunteer residents of an independent living facility. Students improved their physical examination skills and gained confidence administering special questionnaires used to assist in the detecting depression, memory and physical function deficits to elderly volunteers and recommended that all Physician Assistant (PA) program students should visit an independent living facility (ILF).