Information Communication Technology in Social Work Practice- An Overview

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Abstract - **The uses of Information technology still grow within us. Information technology is being incorporated into traditional welfare work practice for administrative and therapeutic purposes. this text provides a summary of how the utilization of technology has evolved in welfare work practice. The Information Technology acceptance model has used to addresses the challenges that Information technology poses for social work practice. this text also examines a theory-based direction for the longer-term creation of technologically driven interventions in social work practice.**

Index Terms - **Social Work, Communication, Information Technology and Social Work Practice.**

INTRODUCTION

Computers have been used for some time in evaluation and research, and they are beginning to have an impact in impact other aspects of social work practice as well. This brief introduction reviews some of the way's information technology is currently being used and suggests how you may be using technology in social work practice in the near future. Although modern computer technology has been in existence for 50 years and is now essential in industries such as banking, travel reservations, medical care, it has yet to make a serious impact on social work practice. That is about to change, however because of developments in the technology that make it more useful in the less structured situations characteristic of social work practice, and because of the availability of extraordinary computing capability at steadily declining cost. Today it is possible to obtain a desktop computer for a starting price in India Rs 10000 that has the computing capacity of a large frame computer of a decade or two ago. Today the most common use of information technology in social work practice is word processing. Increasingly, social workers use their computers to write assessments and progress notes and routine correspondence and reports. Some workers also use database programs to create electronic filing systems for their caseloads and to do reports and analyses of their caseload activities.

OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

In this session, we will look at applications that have been developed specifically for use in social work or more broadly human service practice.

Assessment and Testing: Assessment and testing applications constitute by far the largest number of computer applications in social work practice. There are more than 250 such programs currently available, most of them consisting of computer administered testing, scoring, and interpretation packages. Most of the commonly used assessment devices are now available in computerized versions, including DSM-IV interviewing and diagnostic programs. The Clinical Measurement Package developed by Walter Hudson provides administration and scoring of all Hudson rapid assessment scales, now numbering more than 30(Nurius & Hudson, 1993b). Demonstration and educational versions of this package are available free of cost. Information about many of these applications is readily available on the internet.

Computerized Clinical Records: computerized clinical record keeping systems maintain the complete case record on the computer and usually incorporate case management and caseload management functions as well. Typically, clinical record keeping systems operate on a network or large computer, and the individual worker accesses the system through a computer located in his or her office. Because of the complexities and idiosyncrasies of record keeping requirements, most of these systems have been custom

designed for a particular agency and are not available on the open market. Other record keeping programs emphasize treatment planning and case management. These systems assist the particular in conducting the assessment and selecting treatment goals, and then help monitor client change overtime (Corcoran & Gingerich, 1994; Gingerich, 1995b). Increasingly, case management programs will be able to use the information contained in the case record to assist workers in managing their caseloads more efficiently and may even reduce the amount of time spent on paperwork.

Practice Management and Billing: A number of psychotherapy practice management programs are now available commercially. Most of these systems are designed for small group practices and focus heavily on the clinical information needed to justify services (such as DSM diagnoses, target complaints, level of functioning, and service data) and maintain patient accounts (such as preparing insurance billings and tracking payments).

Managed Care Applications: Computer technology is rapidly being applied in the field of managed behavioral health care, with many of the applications designed for use by practitioners. These systems generally aim to maximize the efficiency of behavioral health interventions by advising on the level of treatment to be provided, the type of treatment to be used, and the most cost-effective management of particular types of cases. Managed care applications basically use information technology to implement the managed care firms approved authorization criteria and practice guidelines. Many of these are based in part on research data, but they are also inevitably the company own practice philosophy. Information technology are most value for social work practice to focused on client change and the interventions that seem to produce client change.

Expert Systems: expert systems are computer programs that contain the expertise of a human expert on a specified problem area and advise the user on the specified problem area. Expert systems grew out of research in artificial intelligence and have been implemented widely in industry, medicine, and computer software. Because of the newness of the technology and unresolved product liability issues,

few if any clinical expert systems are in routine use in social work practice today. Experimental systems have been developed for assessing the risk of child abuse, advising on risk to women of domestic violence, advising on treatment interventions using a brief solution focused therapy approach, or assessing suicide risk. These expert systems can have valuable knowledge-building benefits and can be a useful educational experience.

Computer-Based Interventions: Computer programs have been used to administer cognitive therapy to patients experiencing anxiety and to provide sex therapy for couples. The systems carry out an assessment and assign homework. Based on the response of the client, the computer then provides additional advice and feedback. Another system has been developed for delivering exposure therapy to patients experiencing anxiety. This computer administered program is available to patients via touch-tone telephone, making it accessible for people anywhere to access it virtually anytime.

Graphing Packages: A number of packages have been developed that produce graphs or charts useful in assessment and intervention. Several packages are available that can draw family genograms or eco-maps based on information the user enters into the computer. Some of these programs can maintain a database of the ecosystem over time and permit the user to graph these changes. Some of the record keeping and managed care systems previously mentioned also incorporate a variety of graphs and provide immediate visual feedback on progress to the client and the worker.

Internet and Online Services: The rapid growth of the internet and readily available access to it has opened up a vast array of potential applications in social work practice. The Internet provides immediate access to a rich storehouse of information relevant to social work practice and this is probably the most common use of the Internet today. Information on many topics of internet to social workers can be accessed via websites such as World Wide Web Resources for Social Workers and the Social Work Access Network. Advocacy and fund raising are exciting new uses of the Internet that take advantage of the Internet's capacity to network with millions of people (Hick & McNutt,2002). Finally, the internet is beginning to be

used to deliver professional services. Some social workers are beginning to offer professional services such as counseling over the internet, via email, chat rooms, or real-time voice and video. Types of services, mode of delivery and payment mechanisms are still being developed, and it is impossible to tell now what form online services will eventually take difficult issues pertaining to legal liability, licensing, informed consent, and confidentiality have yet to be resolved. These services are called variously eTherapy, eHealth, TeleHealth, or simply online services. Social workers delivering services online place themselves at some risk until these issues can be clarified.

CONCLUSION

The field of social service education, research, and practice is surrounded by rapid developments in Information Technology. So, on confirm that social service practice upholds the standards and values of social service ethics, it is necessary that social workers are competent and literate in Information Technology. this might position social workers within the least levels of practice to help advance the lives of disenfranchised and disadvantaged persons through greater access to education, knowledge, and other resources. While numerous Information Technology has did not realize their expected potential, the continued rapid climb of knowledge Technology has created a context during which social workers cannot resist technology but must understand the role it plays in lifestyle.

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