Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Science

of

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BSc (University of Victoria, 2009)

“Applications of Telehealth in the Practice, Upgrading of Knowledge, and Communication of Physicians with their Colleagues and Patients in Canada”

School of Health Information Science

Monday, April 24, 2017
1:00PM
Human & Social Development Building
Room A202

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Andre Kushniruk, School of Health Information Science, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Elizabeth Borycki, School of Health Information Science, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Michael Prince, School of Public Health & Social Policy, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Douglas Baer, Department of Sociology, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Applications of Telehealth in the practice, upgrading of knowledge, and communication of physicians with their expert colleagues and patients in Canada was explored in this study. The research used exploratory-grounded theory to investigate the opinions of practicing clinicians regarding the use of Telehealth. The study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with physicians who were using or might in the future use telehealth in their practice. This study was designed to assess the major advantages and shortcomings that Telehealth has to offer in the field of medicine. The research found that clinicians predominantly had a very positive view of Telehealth, although some minor concerns were expressed with respect to the use of Telehealth in private offices and the home (rather than in the hospital). The data indicated that Telehealth can improve overall patient care by bettering the speed and accuracy of communication and diagnosis and the subsequent treatment of patients, saving physicians and patients time and money, reducing waiting lists, aiding the environment, reducing emergency visits and hospitalizations, addressing shortages of physicians (particularly in rural areas), increasing access to specialists, and enabling convenient distance education. These are just some of the many benefits of Telehealth which outweigh its disadvantages.

This study also was designed to extract clinicians’ opinions on avenues for improving Telehealth, which thus led to implications for future research. Barriers to the use of Telehealth were found to include concerns about security and IT support, lack of public knowledge of Telehealth’s existence, and installation and maintenance costs for the necessary equipment in the private sector.

The study suggests that Telehealth will become more widely available and accessible to the general public. The study also proposes that, through increased governmental support and funding, Telehealth should be advertised and promoted, researched in more depth (in part, to discourage misconceptions regarding Telehealth), collaborated on by stakeholders, and expanded.