For patients living with chronic illness, their health care is a finely choreographed routine involving physicians, therapies and laboratory tests, even hospitalizations. For Jan Pelkey, who was Director of Case Management for a large Midwest hospital, coordinating care for patients is an ongoing mission.

Pelkey’s staff of care coordinators made sure the flow was as smooth as possible for patients. This could mean making sure test results get back so the physician has the necessary information, working with insurance, setting up home health care so the patient’s level of care continues once discharged, or even helping find funding sources.

Like other health professionals, Pelkey recognizes and respects an individual’s desire to remain independent at home. She also realizes the cost savings related to keeping a patient at home or preventing a re-hospitalization.

Health care is expensive, and it can be a difficult situation to address: how do you provide the highest quality of care in the most efficient and effective manner? One solution that is having remarkable success is the telemonitoring system.

Telemonitoring, exclusively offered by Advanced TeleHealth Solutions, is an FDA approved Class II medical device that safely, effectively and easily monitors a patient’s vital signs and health information, then transmits the information back to Advanced TeleHealth, where it is monitored by a nurse.

The benefits of this piece of technology are far reaching. Pelkey and her staff have recommended telemonitoring to a number of patients with specific medical needs or living with chronic medical conditions.

According to Pelkey, the primary focus of telemonitoring is getting the patient home where he or she is more comfortable, and making sure they are being monitored appropriately and timely. “Telemonitoring is so easy for people to use. It talks to them, walks them through what they need to do. There’s a real sense of security for patients at home with telemonitoring,” said Pelkey.

Telemonitoring essentially acts like an extra set of eyes, which often means the patient has the ability to remain independent at home. In many cases, the presence of telemonitoring has stopped problems before they occur. “One particular patient with pulmonary hypertension had to make a trip in several times a week to have fluid drained,” Pelkey recalled. “With the use of telemonitoring and Advanced TeleHealth Solutions, we were able to manage this patient’s care at home.”

By carefully monitoring the patient several times a day, Advanced TeleHealth Solutions could tell when it was time to make a home visit and administer care. As a result, the patient was much more comfortable and the home visits saved a trip to the hospital.

Intervention equals savings. For this particular patient, avoiding a trip to the emergency room saved approximately $900. An even greater savings when compared to the average daily cost of $7 for telemonitoring.

Because the goal is wellness and improved quality of life, home health monitoring is a valuable tool. When a patient comes to the emergency room, or is hospitalized, he or she is at a crisis point. With telemonitoring a nurse can make a home visit and alert the attending physician, saving the individual a trip to the hospital.

“With the budget crisis in the state of Missouri involving Medicaid state management, telemonitoring is such an inexpensive alternative to multiple trips to the emergency room or doctor’s office,” Pelkey commented.

“I see telemonitoring decreasing readmissions to the hospital. I see it decreasing the cost of Medicaid to the state and third party insurers. I see it as a real benefit to patients that they do not have to make trips to the hospital, lab or physician’s office. Physicians will have a much better handle on what’s happening to patients in the home.”

Patients who use telemonitoring also benefit from a sense of security knowing that a nurse is monitoring their condition several times a day. “To me the greatest benefit is the ability to closely monitor people with chronic medical conditions who are at risk, said Pelkey.

Telemonitoring alerts the nurse monitoring the data if a patient’s information is outside the parameters set by the physician.

“One this catches on and physicians realize what this can do for their patients, I think we won’t be able to keep them in stock,” said Pelkey.

For more information, or a demonstration of the telemonitoring system from Advanced TeleHealth Solutions, contact Tresa Marlow at 417-883-7500.