



Telehealth and Patient Engagement

Telehealth visits were implemented in many practices within the healthcare systems of care; however, with COVID-19 the expansion of these services has grown. The transition from in-person to audio/video interactions may increase in the long run. (Deloitte consumer survey shows 57 percent of consumers are willing to try telehealth, and 77 percent of those that have tried telehealth report high levels of satisfaction.)

If you have chosen to implement telehealth services in your practices, you probably already went through several steps, in determining:

- health conditions you will support via telehealth
- technology that you will use – video? Telephone?
- who on your team is to support patients?
- modifications to current practices such as clinical workflows in connecting with patients.
- processes to securely and immediately share patient information with others – i.e., specialists and primary care physicians.
- if a three-way telehealth visits between the patient, you and others is needed

Patient Engagement

The standard of care through telehealth is the same as if in person. Prior to the telehealth visit, prepare your office staff and patient by:

- Establishing HIPAA protocols and ensuring the patient of their privacy.
- Capturing information from the patient prior to the visit to ensure the provider has as much relevant information prior to the visit as possible.
- Communicating to your patient the date, time and connection information for the visit.

- Let the patient know how to prepare: medications, labs, forms to be filled, and the purpose of the visit.
- Have staff member test technology with the member before the visit, a day before is ideal.
- Let the patient know how to reach you in case of technical difficulty and get this information from the patient.
- Find out who else will be involved in the patient visit and help them prepare for the visit: suggest a private space if possible, free from distractions, let them know that the visit will start within 15 minutes of the call, so do not leave the visit – in case the doctor is running late.
- Determine if language assistance is needed and secure needed services such as interpretation services.
- Know where the patient will be during the session and have the contact information for the local emergency service.
- Have your EMR pulled up on either a second monitor or split screen.
- If you look down to write information, let the patient know what you are doing.
- Keep the language simple and allow for a delay for the patient to answer or ask questions.
- Ask open ended questions at the beginning of the visit: Tell me how you are feeling in the morning?
- When providing information, ask the patient how they are feeling about the information that was just presented. Ask them to tell you in their own words what is their main health problem and what they are being asked to do.
- Pay attention to body language during video visits and draw the patient out when signs of emotional or physical discomfort.

During the telehealth visit, create an engaging and trusting atmosphere:

- Take a moment in the beginning of the session to build rapport and make the patient comfortable with telehealth; make small talk with the patient.
- Ask permission to look around the home. Notice if there are any firearms in open space.
- If using video technology, look at the camera so the patient can see you.

Let the patient know the call is ending and what to expect:

- Medications review (how to use them and when to use them – ask them to talk to pharmacist).
- Labs that need to take place – where to go and who to call.
- Next appointment – time/place of next appointment.