



QUESTIONS

ANSWERS

Telemedicine 101: Answering Your Questions

What's the difference between telehealth, telemedicine and virtual care?

Telehealth refers to an umbrella of digital and remote healthcare services, while telemedicine specifically indicates evidence-based care involving medical and behavioral treatment rendered by clinicians. Virtual care can mean any digital healthcare services or remote interaction between providers and their patients, such as medication reminder text messages, online chat or video visits.

Will I be reimbursed for a telemedicine visit?

In most cases, yes – although it depends on each patient's insurance carrier, policy and location. Telemedicine reimbursement has improved dramatically in recent years. We recommend researching the federal, state and payer regulations that determine payment for your area and your patients.

Does it take a long time to start a telemedicine program?

Not necessarily. If you have a current urgent need in a specific clinical area, you can quickly stand up a

program to meet that need. However, you can also take your time designing a strategy and laying the groundwork for a more extensive program across multiple facilities or clinical disciplines ensuring you take full advantage of the opportunities for virtual care delivery.

How would I deliver a telemedicine consult?

You can deliver a virtual consult in several ways. Interactive or live video visits (also called synchronous telemedicine) are two-way interactions that take place in real time. Store-and-Forward telemedicine allows you to securely and electronically transmit medical information like lab results or MRIs to another provider for evaluation. Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM) can help you check up on your chronically ill patients by remotely collecting their blood sugar levels, blood pressure readings and other data while they remain at home and then adjusting your treatment plan accordingly.

But telemedicine can only be used for simple issues, right?

Not at all. Telehealth has evolved beyond the Direct-To-Consumer

video calls that treat ear infections and the common cold. Today's data-driven devices enable physicians to deliver a complete evidence-based experience. It can also fit into any point on the care spectrum – with workflows designed to support specialties like stroke, dermatology, behavioral health, cardiology, pediatrics, dentistry, audiology and other disciplines.

We want EHR interoperability. Can telemedicine integrate with my EHR?

The short answer is yes – however, you need to make sure your solution can go beyond integrating its video platform. If a solution isn't capable of data exchange and interoperability, you'll have a tough time running a robust and clinically responsible telemedicine program. Look for a software solution that can update patient data so you can reduce costs and offer the most informed care possible.

How would a telemedicine program support our larger healthcare system?

A good program offers many benefits to hospital systems, private practices

and the community at large. One benefit is solving provider shortages by supplying virtual physicians as needed. Understaffed hospitals can tap backup clinicians to help with intensive care unit support, emergency department (ED) overflow and specialty consults with experts who aren't locally available. A robust virtual care program can also help recruit clinical staff as it offers better work-life balance.

It's important to note that telemedicine isn't just for clinical environments. Prisons, schools, workplaces, research stations, oil rigs and other facilities currently use telehealth to provide faster and better care to patients who would otherwise have to delay or forego medical and behavioral treatment.

Beyond faster care, what are the other benefits?

Remote consultations limit contagion when it comes to infectious disease, protecting both providers and patients. Telemedicine can also foster deeper provider collaboration, making it easy for physicians to exchange medication lists, discharge summaries and treatment plans. Hospitals can also better manage capacity, keeping their exam rooms and inpatient beds open for their sickest patients. Finally, telemedicine can deliver new revenue streams and tremendous cost savings.

Do I have to use a third-party provider network?

No. A provider-agnostic telemedicine

solution allows you to use your own clinicians, so your patients can see the doctors they already know and trust. However, you can still augment coverage with a provider group.

Is telemedicine really secure and compliant?

Yes – with the right solution. Check the vendor's manufacturing and compliance certifications and find out if they meet Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) standards. Your solution should be HIPAA compliant and ideally hosted in a HITRUST-certified environment.

Is there a long learning curve?

No. While training is always the best way to get the most out of your solution, today's telemedicine solutions are designed with an intuitive interface that makes it easy for patients and providers to easily navigate virtual visits and focus on the treatment rather than the IT factor.

Our capital funds are limited. Do I need to invest a large sum up front – or can I build my program over time?

You can launch a telemedicine program without a major investment. Subscription programs like Cost Simplified let you offer virtual care with a minimal budget so you can measure patient response and telemedicine ROI. Another option is to choose a modular solution, so you can start small with one clinical area, then scale your program as you add more specialties or units.

How can I educate my patients about telemedicine?

Using a multichannel approach is best. Talk to them during appointments, but also use emails, newsletters, patient portals and invoice inserts to announce your new program. Explain the benefits such as cost savings and shorter wait times for appointments – and assure them their medical and personal data will be protected. Whenever possible, walk them through a visit when they're in your office so they feel comfortable having a virtual consult at home.

Contact Us +1 480.922.0044 | telemed@telemedicine.com | www.globalmed.com