

TELEMEDICINE 101:

Best Practices for Residents

APPROPRIATE USE

Telemedicine has a wide scope and can be utilized by patients for many acute complaints, chronic disease management, behavioral health consultation, and wellness and prenatal check-ups.

Consider in-person appointments for patients experiencing symptoms outside the reach of telehealth capabilities including those who require specific physical exams or tests and cases with high clinical acuity or complexity (high-risk OB or pain patients, first-time to clinic, etc.).



TIPS FOR SET UP



workstation

- Ensure room is secure for HIPAA
 - Quiet, interruption-free private space
 - Wear headphones
 - Angle screen so no one can walk by and see it
- Wear same level of professional attire as in-person care
- Adequate lighting
- Avoid visual distractions
 - Busy patterned shirts
 - Messy desks / Food and drinks
 - Photos/posters on background wall (Virtual Background may be an option)



technology

- High-speed internet connection
- Consider dual-monitors
- Position webcam at eye-level
- Test your speakers and microphone before every visit
- Turn off other web applications and notifications.
- Do not record visits!

Need an interpreter?
Use UCSF's guide to Zoom conferencing.
<https://bit.ly/zoominterpreter>



BEST "WEBSITE" MANNERS

greeting

- Introduce self and your role.
- Confirm that your patient can see and hear you.
- Acknowledge the use of new technology.
 - **"I realize that this visit style is new. Thank you for giving it a try."**
 - **"It is so nice to hear from you. Sorry this couldn't be in person, but I am glad we can chat safely."**
 - **"Thank you for having me in your home today."**

etiquette

- Be aware of your actions since they will be magnified on camera.
 - Sit fully upright.
 - Don't fidget, stretch, play with your hair, or touch your face.
- Look directly at the camera.
 - Patient will perceive this as making eye contact.
 - Position video window of patient's image at the top of your screen below the webcam.
- Explain and narrate all your actions.
 - **"If you see me glancing off the screen, it is because I am looking at your medical chart."**
 - **"I want to make sure I record your information accurately so I'll be typing as we talk."**

empathy and communication

- Speak slowly and clearly.
 - Pause longer between statements to allow for transmission delay.
 - Type into the chat window to reiterate instructions or next steps.
- Check in frequently to elicit reactions and confirm understanding.
- Nonverbal cues are harder to pick up on in virtual visits - need to be purposeful in conveying these sentiments with your voice.
 - Smile often.
 - Use a warm tone of voice.
- Increase the frequency of empathetic statements to show you are listening.
 - **"I hear concern in your voice. Tell me more about this."**
 - **"Gosh, this sounds really tough."**

THE VIRTUAL PHYSICAL EXAM

"Listen to your patient, he is telling you the diagnosis."

SIR WILLIAM OSLER

Performing a physical exam through telemedicine may seem daunting, but a lot can be gained through a virtual exam.

- Take a thorough history.
- Use the power of observation to determine your patient's acuity and condition. Consider what you can observe in each body system.
- Partner with your patient to gain valuable clinical insight. This includes asking your patient to take vitals with their home monitor or asking a family member for palpation maneuvers.
- Use technology to your benefit - photo or video sharing can show lesions difficult to visualize on webcam.

Helpful resources:



Stanford Dept. of Medicine Problem-Based Approach
(Provider-directed patient self-exam for HEENT, Low back pain, and Shoulder)
<http://bit.ly/virtualphysexam>



Caravan Health's Telehealth Physical Exam Guide
(Telehealth physical exam by systems)
<http://bit.ly/caravantelePE>

DOCUMENTATION & CODING

The reimbursement guidelines for telehealth visits vary by state and payor method/insurance. The COVID-19 pandemic has expanded coverage for telemedicine, with implications for continuing telemedicine in future practice.

Typical requirements for a billable visit include:

- Provider with in-state license
- Patient consent to telehealth visit
- Geographic location of patient and provider
- Length of time spent with patient



This resource was compiled by Drs. Emmeline Ha and Kristen Zwicky, PGY-2 (Stanford-O'Connor Family Medicine Residency, San Jose, CA).

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