Telehealth: What You Need to Know to Get Started

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What is telemental health?

- The use of interactive real-time (synchronous) technologies such as videoconferencing to deliver mental health care to patients (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2019)
Telehealth equipment
Research Supporting Telemental Health

- Effective across various populations and disorders\(^1,\(^2\)
  - Depression, PTSD, anxiety disorders, substance use, and others
- Effective for adults and children\(^1\)\(^-\)\(^3\)
- Effective across racial/ethnic groups\(^2\)\(^,\(^3\)

Research Supporting Telemental Health

• Effective in U.S. and globally\(^1\)
• As effective as in-person treatment\(^2\)
• High satisfaction\(^2,3\)
• Standard of care is the same as in-person treatment\(^4\)

**Bottom Line:** Telehealth is an effective therapeutic modality

Which patients should utilize telehealth?

- Assess level of risk (suicidal ideation, self-injury, etc.)
- Physical safety (externalizing disorders, ADHD, etc.)
- **Standard of care for telehealth is the same as in person treatment.**
  - Same treatment protocols, same supervision of trainees, effective emergency protocols, etc.
- If a clinician cannot provide the same standard of care, he/she should not provide telehealth services.
Videoconference Platform

- HIPAA Compliant
- Easy to use for clinician and patient
- Examples
  - Zoom
  - VidyoConnect
  - VSee
  - Doxy.me
Equipment Needed

• Clinician
  • Computer (desktop or laptop)
  • Web camera
  • Headset with microphone (recommended)
  • Reliable internet connection

• Patient
  • Computer, tablet, or smart phone
  • Reliable internet connection
How does it work?
Review Relevant Telehealth Guidelines

- **State telehealth guidelines and regulations**
- American Telemedicine Association
  - [https://www.americantelemed.org/resource_categories/practice-guidelines/](https://www.americantelemed.org/resource_categories/practice-guidelines/)
- American Psychological Association
  - [https://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/telepsychology](https://www.apa.org/practice/guidelines/telepsychology)
- American Psychiatric Association
- American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
Are telemental health services billable/reimbursable?

- Check with your billing department or state regulatory bodies to determine if telemental health is reimbursable and by which types of providers.
- Utilize correct modifiers and codes to indicate telehealth delivery modality
- Include telehealth specific information in therapy billing notes
  - Location of clinician and patient
  - Videoconference platform utilized
Considerations for Clinicians & Patients

• Clinicians
  • Private location
  • Background
  • Ensuring identity and location of patient
  • Emergency procedures

• Patients
  • Private location
  • For children, caregiver at the home location
  • Do’s and don’t for telehealth (not in bedroom, fully dressed, etc.)
Informed Consent/Consent for Treatment

• Do you have existing consent for treatment?
• Do you need specific telehealth consent?
  • You may or may not have to have written consent for tele treatment. Check with your local licensing board.
• Consider electronic consent options (e.g., Docusign)
  • Always consult with your local regulatory bodies
Next Steps

› Contact your local licensing board for updated regulations and approvals regarding telehealth
› Review telehealth guidelines
› Assess technology (clinician & patient)
› Determine informed consent protocol
› Determine safety protocol
› Determine platform & help patients navigate (downloading app or clicking link, etc.)
› Pilot with 1-2 patients to work out the kinks and then expand
Questions?

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