

# Telehealth essentials every private physician practice must know

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Along with many other kinds of health care organizations, private physician practices nationwide quickly adapted to the needs of the COVID-19 pandemic by implementing telehealth to enable their patients to access care remotely.

Surveys show that patients and doctors value the addition of telehealth as another modality for delivering care. Physician practices are now focusing on whether payers and regulators will enable or inhibit use of telemedicine visits post-pandemic, under what terms and conditions, and how such visits will be evaluated, paid for and best used in a hybrid model that includes traditional in-office visits.

Read on to learn more from the AMA about seven keys that physicians must keep in mind to help make telehealth a lasting part of their successful, high-quality private practices.

## **1** Pandemic's telehealth advances will be lost if Congress doesn't act

The pandemic has proven telehealth is a critical part of effective, efficient and equitable health care, and the AMA is encouraging Congress to act now so patients don't lose the option of connecting with their physicians through this convenient, accessible mode of care.

## **2** Evaluate telehealth's true impact in your physician practice

Virtual visits should be here to stay, but how can medicine measure telehealth's value to ensure that physicians and other clinicians, patients, payers and society are getting the most possible from the technology? The AMA framework, "Return on Health: Moving Beyond Dollars and Cents in Realizing the Value of Virtual Care," helps guide assessment.

### **3 Learn to achieve next-level telehealth practice in 2021**

With physicians adopting telehealth more quickly and completely than they would have without a global health crisis, it's allowed organizations such as the AMA to research patients' and physicians' experiences and identify opportunities to help practices transition into a new era of digitally enabled care that is sustainable and adds value for everyone going forward.

### **4 Don't let shift to telemedicine diminish team-based care**

Amid the telehealth scramble, practices that used a team-based approach to care for years suddenly found themselves defaulting to a system where the physician did it all. But it doesn't have to be that way—nor should it be. Learn more from physician experts on team-based care.

### **5 Why offering integrated behavioral health care via telehealth is a win-win**

Integrating behavioral health care into the primary care setting is a great way to overcome obstacles to behavioral health care. The COVID-19 pandemic has sharpened the focus on the limited availability of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and other professionals with this expertise to meet the especially high demand for support.

And when you can make telehealth services part of your integrated behavioral health care model, it only enhances the services that can be offered and expands the reach physicians have to patients who otherwise wouldn't be able to easily access mental and behavioral health services.

## **6** How to bring warmth to your virtual care visits

As the U.S. health care system remakes itself into one that includes more virtual visits, how can physicians maintain the empathy and “human touch” that are so crucial to a strong patient-physician relationship?

Learn about the ways you can maintain those essential elements even when the patient isn't physically in the same room with you, and how virtual visits can enhance experiences and improve outcomes for patients.

## **7** How to implement telehealth in your practice with equity in mind

Financial barriers, access to technology and technical skill levels need to be addressed upfront to ensure equitable delivery of telehealth services. Learn more about these keys to implementing innovative solutions with an equity lens.

A great way improve your private practice's efforts in this area is the AMA Telehealth Immersion Program, which is designed to help physicians, practices and health systems implement, optimize, sustain and scale their telehealth efforts.

The benefits of expanded telemedicine are clear. Find out how to join physicians who are advocating to permanently expand virtual care coverage.



It takes astute clinical judgement, effective collaboration with colleagues, and innovative problem-solving to succeed in an independent setting that is often fluid, and the AMA offers the resources and support physicians need to both start and sustain success in private practice.

Find out more about the AMA Private Practice Physicians Section, which seeks to preserve the freedom, independence and integrity of private practice.