Telehealth Toolkit
for COVID-19

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Indemnity - is telehealth covered under my policy?

Yes, telehealth (healthcare services provided over the internet, video conference or phone) is covered under your MDA National Professional Indemnity Insurance Policy, provided both you and the patient are located in Australia and the service is provided in accordance with the guidelines of the Medical Board, the relevant College and Medicare.

Planning a video-based telehealth service - what set up do I need?

➢ **Equipment -** dual screens, webcam, headset, internet provider
➢ **Environment –** private, quiet, neutral background, well lit
➢ **Video conference software**

Seek advice on the most appropriate platform for your needs from your practice's IT provider, your local Primary Health Network, the RACGP, ACRRM and the Centre for Online Health.

The RACGP supports the use of free apps, such as Skype, if doing telehealth on an ad hoc basis but for an ongoing telehealth service a professional platform will provide greater quality and sustainability.

Considerations for purchasing a platform include - privacy and security, availability of technical help and support, broadband speed, waiting room functionality, browser compatibility, useability, cost and billing support.

Billing and Medicare

From 30 March 2020, the new MBS telehealth items can be used for all non-admitted patients.
From 6 April 2020, some patients can be privately billed and receive a Medicare rebate.
Telehealth consultations may also be privately billed without any Medicare contribution or rebate, with appropriate informed financial consent.

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What should I do differently compared to a face-to-face consultation?

Conducting a telehealth consultation

➢ Test your audio and video is working
➢ Have your patient's phone number at hand
➢ Speak slightly slower than you would in normal conversation
➢ Pause after speaking – take care not to talk over the top of your patient
➢ Avoid excessive movement
➢ Inform your patient if you need to look away from the screen e.g. to look at medical records
➢ Ask if your patient can see hear and see you
➢ Check the patient's identity – ask the patient to provide their name, address and DOB
➢ If there is anyone else in the room, ask them to move into camera view or leave the room
➢ Inform your patient you will phone them if there are any technical difficulties and confirm the phone number is correct
➢ Prepare your patient before you begin the consultation – if necessary, ask the patient to adjust their camera, re-position themselves or the person accompanying them, turn on the light, or close the curtains behind them
➢ Obtain verbal or written consent for the telehealth consultation - outline the reasons and benefits, the process, not the same as face-to-face, limited examination, the possibility of technical problems, reasonable steps will be taken to protect privacy but cannot be guaranteed, the costs of the consultation and assignment of Medicare benefit (if relevant)
➢ Documentation – include in the medical records the same level of detail as a face-to-face consultation with an additional record that is it a video or phone consultation, location of the patient and patient's consent. Consider also documenting the rationale for telehealth consultation vs physical consultation, responsibility for any follow-up actions, the presence of other parties and the patient's consent for their involvement, any technical problems which may have compromised the safety and quality of the consultation
➢ Information about electronic prescribing can be found here.

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Key risk management strategies

➢ Not all consultations can be conducted safely by telehealth and so ensure you have a plan if a face-to-face consultation is required– some patients or types of consultations and presentations will not be amenable to telehealth e.g. when a physical examination is critical for diagnosis or treatment
➢ Keep good medical records

Resources
- **Medical Board of Australia**
    - Guidelines for technology-based patient consultations
    - Inter-jurisdictional technology-based patient consultations
- **RACGP**
    - Guide to providing telephone and video consultations in general practice
    - Telehealth video consultations guide
    - mHealth in general practice
- **ACCRM**
    - Telehealth guidelines
- **RANZCP**
    - Professional Practice Standards and Guides for Telepsychiatry
- **RACP**
    - Telehealth guidelines and practical tips
- **AMA**
    - Position Statement: technology-based patient consultations
- **University of Queensland Centre for Online Health**
    - Quick guides for telehealth
- **MDA National – New telehealth related FAQs**
    - https://www.mdanational.com.au/mda-national-coronavirus-advice

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