

Telehealth Best Practices

Telehealth refers to the use of remote technologies to support long-distance clinical health care, patient and professional health-related education, public health and health administration.

The use of telehealth can be a valuable tool to improve access to medical care, particularly in settings where healthcare is not available (rural or remote locations) or when patients are unable to reach healthcare sites (lack of transport or decreased mobility). With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated social distancing practices, telehealth has been increasingly adopted as an alternative to traditional on-site medical care. As of July 2021, telehealth utilization was 38 times higher than before the pandemic, with a stable 13-17% of patients using this modality across all medical specialties.

BEST PRACTICES IN TELEHEALTH

PREPARE IN ADVANCE

When your virtual appointment is approaching, you can take steps to prepare in advance and make sure everything runs smoothly:

- **Make a cheat sheet.** Write down any health conditions you may have, medications you are taking (including name and dose), symptoms (type, severity, when did they start/end) and questions and concerns you want to discuss. Have paper and pen ready to take notes during your appointment.
- **Check your tech.** It is essential that you confirm the technology you will need for your appointment. Make sure your internet connection is working and check if your device is fully charged or plugged in. Test any links your doctor's office sent you to ensure they are working correctly and that you can log in to their platforms. Make sure your camera is steady and provides a clear vision of yourself. To eliminate distractions, close all apps you do not need during the visit.
- **Get comfortable.** Chose a well-lit spot with reduced background noise where you can sit comfortably. Wear loose clothing if you need to show your doctor something on your skin or a specific part of your body. If you are using a phone your arm may get tired, so make arrangements to steady it on the table with props.

DURING YOUR APPOINTMENT

Talk clearly and make sure your doctor can hear you. Let your provider know if you are having trouble hearing or seeing them. If you experience technical issues, double check that your device is charged/plugged in and your internet connection is stable. If the telehealth platform is web-based, make sure your internet browser (like Google Chrome, Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox) is updated. If the issues do not resolve, try restarting your device, connecting with a different device or reaching out to your doctor's office for assistance.

If you have a vision, hearing, or speech disability, check with your doctor's office what aids are available. You are entitled to aids and services such as:

- Real-time captioning (also known as computer-assisted real-time transcription, or CART)
- Telecommunications relay services, reached by calling 7-1-1
- Video relay service
- Video remote interpreting

TELEHEALTH FOR PATIENTS WITH LYMPHOMA

Patients with lymphoma may have reduced defenses against infection and many are at increased risk of severe events due to COVID-19. According to recent recommendations from the American Society of Clinical Oncology, telehealth can be incorporated into routine care to prevent unnecessary exposure to the virus. Telehealth can also support the monitoring of any existing comorbidities you might have and aid in the surveillance of new symptoms. Your doctor will evaluate the risk and assess whether telehealth is the best option for you. Bear in mind that some physical examinations are not feasible using telehealth, especially in first-time patient visits. For example, your doctor may need to draw blood or perform a biopsy. It is important that your doctor discusses these limitations and presents suitable alternatives when physical presence is irreplaceable.

LRF'S FOCUS ON LYMPHOMA MOBILE APP

Electronic applications provide practical support for cancer patients, by monitoring symptoms and providing personalized feedback and tailored options for supportive care. The *Focus On Lymphoma* app is the first mobile application that provides patients and caregivers comprehensive content based on their lymphoma subtype and tools to help manage their lymphoma such

as, keep track of medications and blood work, track symptoms, and document treatment side effects. The *Focus On Lymphoma* mobile app is available for download for iOS and Android devices in the Apple App Store and Google Play. For additional information on the mobile app, visit FocusOnLymphoma.org. To learn more about any of these resources, visit our website at lymphoma.org, or contact the Lymphoma Research Foundation (LRF) Helpline at 800-500-9976 or helpline@lymphoma.org.

OTHER OPTIONS FOR PATIENTS WITH LYMPHOMA

Other examples of successful technology used in cancer care include cancer telegenetics (remote genetic counseling), remote chemotherapy supervision, palliative care, and approaches to increase access to cancer clinical trials. Recent studies found that virtual programs can help patients with lymphoma cope with post-treatment challenges and reduce fears of uncertainty. Remote rehabilitation and exercise programs can also help cancer patients regain functional ability. Such programs can be adopted early in cancer care models to boost your physical, emotional and social well-being. Check with your doctor's office to see what services you may be able to get from home.



TELEHEALTH PRIVACY

During your virtual appointment, you may be required to disclose private information and discuss sensitive topics. A private setting is essential to establish and maintain trust with your doctor. Consider the following aspects in advance:

- **Check your surroundings.** Make sure you find a private location where you feel comfortable disclosing sensitive information.
- **Confidentiality is key.** Use encrypted platforms to communicate with your doctor. If passwords are required, do not disclose them to third parties.

Just like for on-site consultations, telehealth providers must protect your private health information. Healthcare providers can use platforms that are compliant with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) rules for the good faith provision of telehealth services. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, federal authorities have also temporarily allowed telehealth consultations

using apps you may already have in your smartphone (including Apple FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, Google Hangouts, Zoom or Skype). Public facing applications like Facebook Live and Twitch are not allowed for this purpose. If you have any privacy concerns, ask your doctor about the apps they use at their office and if they comply with HIPAA guidelines.



LRF'S HELPLINE AND LYMPHOMA SUPPORT NETWORK

A lymphoma diagnosis often triggers a range of feelings and concerns. In addition, cancer treatment can cause physical discomfort. The LRF Helpline staff members are available to answer your general questions about a lymphoma diagnosis and treatment information, as well as provide individual support and referrals to you and your loved ones. Callers may request the services of a language interpreter. A part of the Helpline is LRF's one-to-one peer support programs, Lymphoma Support Network. This program connects patients and caregivers with volunteers who have experience with lymphomas, similar treatments, or challenges, for mutual emotional support and encouragement. You may find this useful whether you or a loved one is newly diagnosed, in treatment, or in remission.

Resources

LRF offers a wide range of free resources that address treatment options, the latest research advances, and ways to cope with all aspects of lymphoma and CLL/SLL including our award-winning mobile app. LRF also provides many educational activities, including our in-person meetings, podcasts, webinars for people with lymphoma, as well as patient guides and e-Updates that provide the latest disease-specific news and treatment options. To learn more about any of these resources, visit our website at www.lymphoma.org, or contact the LRF Helpline at (800) 500-9976 or helpline@lymphoma.org.

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