

Health Hawke's Bay- Te Oranga Hawke's Bay Optimising Telehealth

Position statement

Health Hawke's Bay supports the statements made by the New Zealand Medical Council (6) and Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (9): To support the ongoing provision of telehealth services within general practice to assist with access to safe and sustainable care.

Community based services are built on the quality of the relationship between clinicians and patients. Every method used to deliver care needs to actively support the key relationship between the patient and the general practice team. Telehealth complements, but cannot replace the need for in-person consultations.

A sustained move to providing telehealth is part of the evolution of general practice, providing additional choice to patients, improving timely access and continuity of the delivery of service in the community.

Specific care needs to be taken to ensure telehealth services are easily accessible to people of all ethnicities, age, socioeconomic status, location and language.

In using telehealth, you should be aware of its limits and ensure that you do not attempt to provide a service which puts patient safety at risk.

An in-person consultation is still considered best practice when prescribing medicine for the first time to a patient. If you are unable to see the patient in-person, a telehealth consultation could be considered as an option when the clinician can safely assess the patient's identity and medical history (5).

Health Hawke's Bay recognises the guidance and utilises the resources of organisations with experience in delivering telehealth services:

- Allied Health Aotearoa New Zealand (1)
- NZ Telehealth Forum & Resource Centre (8)
- The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (10).

And relevant legislation:

- Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights Regulations 1996 (2)
- Health Information Privacy Code 1994 (Privacy Commission) (3)
- HISO 10029:2015 Health Information Security Framework (4).

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Definitions

In-person: The doctor and patient are physically present in the same consultation room.

Telehealth: The use of information and communication technologies to deliver health care when patients and care providers are not in the same physical location.

Core Telehealth principles (based on ACCRM Telehealth Standards (10))

Clinical safety

1. The basic standards of professional conduct governing each health care profession are not altered by the use of Telehealth technologies to deliver health care, conduct research, or provide education.
2. Services provided via Telehealth must adhere to the basic assurance of quality and professional health care in accordance with each health care disciplines clinical standards.
3. Any assessment to inform whether a telehealth consultation is a safe option for a patient needs, must be completed by a suitably qualified practitioner.
4. Health care professionals and practices do not need additional; licensing/accreditation to provide services via Telehealth technologies. At the same time, Telehealth technologies cannot be used, as a vehicle for providing services that otherwise is not legally or professionally authorised (refer to Professional Codes and Standards of Practice).
5. Each health care discipline and health service must examine how its patterns of care delivery are affected by Telehealth.
6. The practice is responsible for developing its own processes for assuring competence in the delivery of health care via Telehealth technologies.

Privacy and confidentiality

7. Confidentiality of patient Telehealth consultations, patient health records, and the integrity of information in the health care information system are essential.
8. Health professionals must make their identity known and confirm the identity of each patient at each encounter. Patients must be informed about the process, its attendant risks and benefits, and their own rights and responsibilities, and must provide adequate informed consent.
9. Documentation must assure that each encounter includes recommendations and treatment, communication with other health care providers as appropriate, and adequate protections for patient confidentiality.
10. Documentation should meet all the standards required of your professional role.

Technology

11. The safety of patients and practitioners must be ensured. Safe hardware and software, combined with demonstrated user competence, are essential components of safe Telehealth practice.
12. Hardware must be of a standard to supply the patient with a quality health care experience whether using in built webcam and audio or external add on device.

Consumer experience and choice

13. The integrity and therapeutic value of the client and health care practitioner should be maintained and not be diminished by the use of Telehealth technology.
14. Telehealth must enhance the existing clinician patient relationship and not fragment it.
15. Telehealth should complement existing services, build on rural workforce and referral patterns to avoid further service fragmentation and address practicalities of coordination, scheduling and support from the patient's perspective to improve their continuity of care.

Resources

1. https://www.alliedhealth.org.nz/uploads/8/8/9/4/88944696/best_practice_guide_for_telehealth_-_april_2018.pdf
2. <https://www.hdc.org.nz/your-rights/about-the-code/code-of-health-and-disability-services-consumers-rights/>
3. <https://www.privacy.org.nz/the-privacy-act-and-codes/codes-of-practice/health-information-privacy-code-1994/>
4. <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/health-information-security-framework-dec2015.pdf>
5. <https://www.mcnz.org.nz/assets/News-and-Publications/Consultations/7b014a8b1f/Draft-statement-on-Telehealth-June-2020.pdf>
6. <https://www.mcnz.org.nz/assets/standards/06dc3de8bc/Statement-on-telehealthv3.pdf>
7. https://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/Public/Nursing/Code_of_Conduct/NCNZ/nursing-section/Code_of_Conduct.aspx?hkey=7fe9d496-9c08-4004-8397-d98bd774ef1b
8. <https://www.telehealth.org.nz/assets/getting-started/Telemedicine-Guideline-for-NZTRC.pdf>
9. https://www.rnzcgp.org.nz/RNZCGP/Advocacy/Position_statements/Telehealth.aspx
10. https://www.racp.edu.au//docs/default-source/advocacy-library/telehealth-guidelines-and-practical-tips.pdf?sfvrsn=daa2f1a_18