Practical Applications of Teledentistry—Expanding Access to Care

Linda Mann, EPDH
Director, Community Outreach
Teledentistry?
What is Teledentistry?

Use of communications technology for oral health assessment, consultation, and education.

**Synchronous**
A dental provider views a live communications feed to consult and diagnose the patient.

**Asynchronous**
Charts and diagnostic material are electronically sent to a dental provider to review at a later date.

On the other end of the feed, a dental hygienist or other medical practitioner uses digital x-rays, intraoral cameras and other tools to gather information about the patient.

Teledentistry allows dental providers in central locations to provide quality assessments and diagnoses to patients in distant locations, like much of rural North Carolina, where communities traditionally lack access.
How it all started...

  - Dentists and allied dental personnel collaborate at a distance
  - Establishes a community based collaborative virtual health home for populations that would otherwise not receive dental care
  - Brings care to where the people are
  - Allows all professionals to work at the top of their profession
The Virtual Dental Home
Results of Pilot

- Over 700 students received dental care in their schools
- 53% had untreated decay which means 47% were able to be “kept healthy” in the community setting

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Training dental hygienists to place interim therapeutic restorations in a school-based teledentistry program: Oregon's virtual dental home

Richie Kohli, Jennifer Clemens, Linda Mann, Meagan Newton, Paul Glassman, Eli Schwarz

Affiliations + expand
PMID: 34142372 DOI: 10.1111/jphd.12465
Expansion to other sites

- Medical clinics
- Places of worship
- Schools
- Social services
- Mental health
- Homes
Other avenues of Teledentistry
• ADA policy- ada.org/about/governance/current-policies/ada-policy-on-teledentistry
  “The ADA believes that examinations performed using teledentistry can be an effective way to extend the reach of dental professional, increasing access to care by reducing the effect of distance barriers to care.”

• Accuracy and effectiveness of teledentistry: a systematic review of systematic reviews
  nature.com/articles/s41432-022-0257-8
  “Current evidence supports teledentistry as an effective means for dental referrals, treatment planning and compliance and treatment viability.”
In-Person Versus “Virtual” Dental Examination: Congruence Between Decision-Making Modalities

MAYSAM NAMAKIAN, MPH; PAUL SUBAR, DDS, EDD; PAUL GLASSMAN, DDS, MA, MBA; ROBERT QUADE, PhD, MBA; AND MAUREEN HARRINGTON, MPH

ABSTRACT This study evaluated the agreement of a dentist’s conclusions reached through an in-person versus a virtual examination. The dentist determined whether a patient was healthy enough to be treated only by allied dental personnel in a community setting or whether the patient needed to be seen by a dentist. The study concludes that a virtual examination is a strong substitute for an in-person examination and validates the application of telehealth-enabled examinations.
Legislative action

• Senate Bill 786 from the 2017 session- requires the Oregon Board of Dentistry to allow dental care provider to use telehealth when dental care provider determines telehealth is appropriate. Requires board to treat provision of dental care service in same manner regardless of method of delivery of dental service.
What’s next?

• Expansion to more sites (Hospitals, Substance abuse recovery centers, Care homes for Seniors and those with disabilities)

• Incorporate 3D scanners
Thank you!

Linda Mann, EPDH
Director, Community Outreach
mannl@interdent.com