

Wyoming Telehealth Network

May Provider Spotlight

Jennifer Knerr MS, LAT, ATC



Jennifer Knerr is the Athletic Trainer for the University of Wyoming's Campus Recreation & Wellness Center. She has worked as an athletic trainer for over 20 years in various settings including collegiate and high school athletics, an outpatient physical therapy clinic, and as an instructor for Sports Medicine related classes in both the high school and university settings. She shared her telehealth expertise in managing concussions at a recent conference and the WyTN caught up with her afterwards to learn more about her inventive telehealth work.

1. When did you first hear about telehealth? How did you feel about it then? How do you feel about it now?

Jennifer Knerr: I am not sure when I first learned about telehealth. I feel like I have known it exists for a while and did some of it without even really calling it "telehealth". My feelings about telehealth have not really changed I don't think. There are definite advantages to telehealth and some situations where it does the job it needs to do. Telehealth provides a great hybrid experience for the patient and allows

the health care provider to determine if a physical exam is indeed necessary. Telehealth can give the provider a heads up on what may be coming into the office. If an initial visit is provided via telehealth, the provider is better able to determine the amount of time that will need to be allotted for the patient. This helps to decrease the “20 minute appointment fits all” scenario. There may be other situations where an in-person visit is not necessary and the patient has saved time by simply logging into the video room or picking up the phone. Overall, I feel that it just one more tool in the tool box to help patients get the care they are seeking.

2. When did you begin offering telehealth services? What prompted the need to offer these services?

Jennifer: As an Athletic Trainer, I feel like I have done some sort of telehealth for a long time. It is a regular occurrence that athletes, patients, (and of course my own siblings and parents), call with questions about a new injury, previous injury, illness, or health condition. Some athletes on teams I work closely with have initiated a video call to ask about something that has happened. All of this I would consider telehealth. Like many people, I started to formally offer telehealth at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since I work in a gym, we closed the middle of March and my EMR platform already had a telehealth option that I had used very rarely. I quickly learned how to use this feature and began offering formal telehealth appointments.

3. What motivates you to continue offering telehealth services?

Jennifer: The biggest motivating factor for me is that telehealth can be in the best interest of the patient. It gives them a quick and easy way to have a quick chat about something they are seeking answers to. Sometimes their question can be answered and the “problem” can be solved. If it is something that should be evaluated in person, it gives them more reason to seek additional care and better health is better for everyone and every community.

4. What is your proudest accomplishment with telehealth?

Jennifer: I am most proud of the fact that even with the closure of our facility I was able to offer some version of health care similar to what I was doing in person. I was able to find a way to continue to help students and check in on their physical and mental health. I am so glad that I was able to quickly figure out the system to make visits possible. I was not as efficient as I could have been to start, but I learned, and was able to continue to help students during an unprecedented time.

5. What advice would you give patients wanting to try telehealth?

Jennifer: My advice would be to give it a try. It is different than a traditional setting and there are certainly some different challenges, but all in all it’s an easy way to get some health care advice and to find out if you are in need of additional care.

6. What advice would you give providers wanting to start offering telehealth?

Jennifer: Give it a try! You will have challenges that are easy to overcome, and some not so easy, but you will learn how to do things differently. Doing things differently isn't always bad, it will help you be a better provider for your patients, even if the end result is to refer them for an in-person evaluation or appointment.

7. What was the biggest barrier in providing telehealth services? Have you overcome it?

Jennifer: I felt like there were so many barriers when I began this process. I didn't have the correct permission to treat forms and I wasn't super knowledgeable about the platform. I also did not have a good space to be able to demonstrate any exercises or movements I wanted them to do. Sometimes the patient was not in a big enough space for me to watch them do a movement or the video would cut out. I think the answers to overcoming all of these barriers was to continue to learn about the platform, try out different ways and let my patients know I was trying things out. They were very patient as we both muddled through the process. I guess that all sums up to learning and patience was how I was able to overcome the initial challenges.

8. How do you think implementing telehealth now will affect how things will be done at your organization after the pandemic is over?

Jennifer: I will continue to offer the option of telehealth for students. I believe we will adapt to have more of a hybrid approach to health care. There are certainly more reasons than COVID-19 as to why a virtual appointment would be helpful for a patient. I think that this forced implementation of telehealth will benefit the Athletic Training services at the University of Wyoming as well as the students we serve.

9. Is there anything you learned the hard way in telehealth implementation?

Jennifer: Yes! Detailed and clear communication with your patient before the actual appointment is helpful. A detailed email or a phone call that lets them know what to expect with a telehealth appointment, and possible solutions to a technical problem that might arise. If things don't go how you expect, the patient then has the information they need to re-connect with you.

10. Do you have any telehealth hacks or tricks?

Jennifer: The biggest "trick" I learned is to be flexible. If things don't go how you thought they were going to go, be patient with yourself and try another way. Now that I know more about the WyTN, I will be contacting them with questions and see if they have an answer instead of taking weeks to figure out by myself☺.

Bonus Question: Do you have a favorite podcast, book, or author?

Jennifer: All-time favorite book is "The Spy Wore Red" by Aline Griffith, Countess of Romanones. A true story about espionage work in Spain during WWII.