

Wyoming Telehealth Network (WyTN)

Sample Letters to the Editor for Telehealth Awareness Week

September 19-25, 2021

Promoting Telehealth as the New Normal

Finding a silver lining during COVID-19 can be difficult, but one rainbow from this storm is that the pandemic has catapulted medicine to widely accept the utilization of telehealth. While we all await the new normal of everyday life without the threat of COVID-19, healthcare should use this moment to leap forward.

Efforts to limit office visits to prevent the spread of disease has necessitated the rapid implementation of telehealth. Telehealth access has helped keep the pace for patients for routine wellness and follow up visits, reducing the risk for progression of chronic health issues and/or delayed diagnosis of new ones, and re-emergence of other preventable illnesses.

I first understood the immense value of telehealth on **(insert date)**. **(Insert your own personal story about the impact of telehealth either for you personally or in your practice)**

Until governments across the country facilitated the rapid expansion of telehealth due to the pandemic, barriers included regulatory hurdles, billing, and institutional resistance to change. These difficulties made the broad implementation of telehealth arduous. Now that these barriers have been lifted and telehealth has been proven effective for a variety of visits, we should use this moment to reevaluate our delivery of healthcare, and create more access where we can. Telehealth brings access to rural Wyomingites where provider shortages and travel are inescapable obstacles. Telehealth can help hard working people miss less work and students miss less school.

Telehealth is not a cure-all, but should be a critical part of our new normal in medicine. To learn more, visit <http://wyomingtelehealth.org/>.

Finding the Right Candidates for Telehealth

Telehealth has proved during the pandemic to be a powerful diagnostic and treatment option. Telehealth is accessible, convenient and, with the reimbursement support of the federal government during the outbreak, has been affordable for patients and providers. But what makes a good patient candidate for telehealth?

Many Wyomingites are growing more accustomed to using technology for ordering groceries, socializing, learning, communicating with friends and families, and paying their bills, amongst other services. Making the transition to telehealth services for these patients is a natural next step for many. Most users report they like telehealth services—some even prefer them.



One thing is for certain – telehealth expansion is going to continue to expand. Right now, we are only experiencing the initial phases of telehealth potential. There are so many new ways to keep people in their homes to manage their health and most importantly, prevent trips to the hospital.

For the benefit of COVID-19 patients who are being treated safely at home with telehealth visits; for rural patients with limited health care access; for the increasing numbers of patients with behavioral health issues; for home-bound patients; and, for patients with chronic illnesses, providers and patients should continue their pursuit to embrace telehealth as an effective and quality alternative when needed for appointments. To learn more, visit <http://wyomingtelehealth.org/>.

Telemental Healthcare

One in five people will have some kind of mental illness in their lifetime. Yet despite how common these conditions are, stigma remains the greatest barrier to individuals seeking help regarding their mental illness. What if you could access mental healthcare in the privacy of your own chosen location?

Mental health is just as important as physical health, and utilizing telemental health can help reduce barriers such as travel, stigma, and finding the time to fit an appointment into your busy schedule. Can you hop onto an appointment on your lunch break? No problem. Telemental health can fit into your busy schedule.

Be it adjusting to working from home, learning how to parent during a pandemic, or refraining from seeing friends and family, we've all had to change our usual way of life in one way or another, and it's been hard. With the ongoing threat of COVID-19 and the rest of our everyday stresses like financial troubles, relationships, sexual identity, depression, illness and loneliness to name a few, talking with someone can help.

Wyoming is utilizing telemental health in a variety of ways including the new suicide hotline. Residents in crisis should call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). It's free, confidential and can help you and your loved ones who might need help.

Whether you need temporary support or help to reach long-term goals, telemental health can help diagnose, treat and offer you the convenience you need to cope with your struggles. To learn more, visit <http://wyomingtelehealth.org/>.

