

Telehealth Patient Engagement: Strategies for Rural Communities

Presented by:

Jody Haines, BS, MHA, FACHE, C-DHL



Roadmap for Today

- Telehealth definitions & necessities
- Building trust in telehealth services in rural communities
- Tools for enhancing communication between healthcare providers and patients
- Strategies for encouraging patient participation:
- How telehealth can promote patient engagement:
 - Continuous care
 - Access to specialized services
 - Follow-up care, etc.

Telehealth: Definitions & Necessities

Modality level-setting and pre-requisites for delivery of telehealth services.



Level Set: Modality Definitions

- Telehealth/Telemedicine- Traditional
 - Provider beams into eligible originating site (facility) where patient is located or ambulates to (outside of MSA, within HPSA)
 - Traditional, permanently approved care modality
- Telehealth/Telemedicine- Direct to Patient/Consumer (D2P/D2C)
 - Provider beams in directly to patient, usually to patient's home setting
 - Currently set to expire 9/30/2025
- Virtual Care Services/Communication Technology-Based Services
 - 24/7 on-demand care
 - Interprofessional consults ("curbside consults")/e-consults
 - Virtual/remote check-ins, Asynchronous options, e-visits
 - Care management/Transitional care management
 - Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM), Remote Therapeutic Monitoring (RTM)

Level Set: Telehealth Necessities

- **Consent** | Always obtain and document patient consent for all/any telehealth and virtual care services.
- **Modality** | Always document the modality of the telehealth and virtual care service. If it was audio-only or via audio-visual connection, be sure to notate this. If the call starts as audio-visual and reverts to audio, please document accordingly.
- **State Licensure** | Providers must always be licensed in the state in which the patient is physically located during the visit.
- **HIPAA** | Only use HIPAA-certified and organizationally approved telehealth platforms to connect with patients.
- **Eligible Providers** | Only certain providers are eligible to provide telehealth and virtual care services.
- **Provider Location** | If a provider is seeing patients from a location other than the clinic (i.e., home office), be sure to document that provider's location within the visit note.

Building Trust in Telehealth Services Within Rural Communities

Rural communities depend and rely on telehealth services, both emergent and routine.



Building Trust

- Patient-centered
- Education and sharing of services available
 - Traditional telemedicine (in clinic and hospital)
 - Direct to Patient/Consumer (at home)
 - Clear and regular communication
- High quality: Credentialing and licensure
- Building and supporting a digitally-enabled culture
 - Encouraging patients to be engaged (ask questions, share concerns, provide feedback)
- Sustainability



Building Trust: Practical Applications

- Community Health Needs Assessment
- Direct to Patient modality- promoting local care
- Patients do better when they can stay closer to home
- Strategic delivery: Partner with like-minded organizations
 - Consider all modalities and opportunities
- Sustainability: centralizing and sharing resources



► [Front Public Health](#). 2023 Oct 19;11:1148277. doi: [10.3389/fpubh.2023.1148277](#) [↗](#)

More patient-centered care, better healthcare: the association between patient-centered care and healthcare outcomes in inpatients

"We invest in partnerships with top physicians, the latest equipment and technology, and training to ensure our facility serves as a premier local resource for our patients with the full understanding that outcomes improve when stress on a patient's entire circle of support is minimized," said Candice R. Smith, MSN, chief executive officer of HRMC.

Younger generation of doctors increasingly likely to stay local

BMJ 2013 ; 346 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.f1919> (Published 25 March 2013)
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Timely Doctor Visits Linked to Better Outcomes When Patients Enter a Skilled Nursing Facility

Medicare Rules Need Updating to Ensure Patients Get Care When They Need It, New Study Suggests

January 29, 2024

The Benefits of Recovering Close to Home: Enhancing Patient Care and Recovery

When it comes to surgical recovery, the environment can play a crucial role in the healing process. For patients in rural areas like Hereford, having the option to recover close to home, surrounded by friends and family, can significantly enhance their overall care and recovery experience. It also reduces stress and pressure on loved ones who provide support and assistance in the recovery process.

Digital Tools for Enhancing Communication

Provider and patient relationships are rooted in communication and trust.



Digital Tools

1. Patient Portals

- Secure online platforms for messaging, viewing test results, scheduling, and accessing records.

2. Telehealth Platforms

- Facilitate remote consultations via video, audio, or chat.

3. Mobile Health (mHealth) Apps

- Help patients manage conditions, track symptoms, and communicate with providers.
- Examples: MySugr (for diabetes), Medisafe (medication reminders), HealthTap.

4. Secure Messaging Systems

- Encrypted messaging for real-time or asynchronous communication between patients and providers.
- Often integrated within EHRs (e.g., Epic, Cerner).

5. Automated Chatbots and Virtual Assistants

- AI-powered tools that provide answers to common questions or triage symptoms before visits.
 - Case example: Buoy Health, Babylon Health.
- Built into the organizational website or separate.
 - Case example: COVID triage and care seekers assistant/chatbot

Clinical & Administrative Tools

1. Shared Decision-Making Aids

- Tools (e.g., visual aids, decision trees) that help patients understand treatment options and participate in decisions.
- Often used in managing chronic diseases or elective procedures.

2. Translation and Interpretation Services

- Essential for patients with limited English proficiency.
- Examples: LanguageLine, CyraCom.

3. Electronic Health Records (EHRs) with Integrated Communication

- Allow collaborative care and sharing of notes, summaries, and care plans.
- Voice enabled documentation to assist providers with focusing on patient rather than electronic device.
- Assist with clinical use cases to assist with patient progression, reducing staff administrative burden and workflow inefficiencies
 - Case example: Telepsychiatry consult order

Training & Methodologies

1. Motivational Interviewing

- A conversational technique used by providers to encourage behavior change in a patient-centered way.

2. Teach-Back Method

- Ensures patient understanding by having them repeat back the information in their own words.

3. Health Assessments & Ancillary Support

- Tools to assess and adapt communication to the patient's literacy level.
- Digital health literacy and navigation
- Community Health Worker (CHW) programs and personnel support
- Telepresenters and Site Facilitators
 - End-user experience
 - Technical and infrastructure components

Emerging Technologies & Application of

1. AI-Powered Voice Assistants

- Used in clinics to document conversations and summarize notes (e.g., Suki, Nuance Dragon Ambient eXperience).

2. Wearables and Remote Monitoring Devices

- Automatically send data (e.g., blood pressure, glucose) to providers, fostering proactive communication

3. Clinical Digital Assistant/Generative AI

- Reviews and preps the chart for provider review, addresses “gaps”, advancing care continuity.
- [Case example](#): Billings Clinic



Strategies for Encouraging Patient Participation

Engagement is core to care continuity.



Strategies:

1. Educate and Build Confidence

Provide Clear Instructions

- Educate when telehealth is an option.
- Step-by-step guides, videos, or checklists on how to join a telehealth appointment.
- Offer test calls or tech support before appointments.

Highlight Benefits

- Emphasize convenience, reduced travel, quicker access to care, and continuity.

Address Privacy and Security

- Reassure patients about data protection and confidentiality of telehealth platforms.

2. Tailor to Patient Needs

Offer Applicable Services and Cater to Multilingual and Culturally Sensitive Services

- Ensure services provided proactively meets and exceeds patient demand.

Choose the Right Platform

- Ensure the platform is user-friendly, accessible on phones/tablets, and compatible with various internet speeds.
- Multiple platforms can be tricky to manage.

Connectivity, Device, and Internet Access Support

- Consider lending programs, community partnerships, or guiding patients to local resources (e.g., libraries with Wi-Fi).

Strategies:

3. Build Trust Through the Care Team

Provider Endorsement

- A personal recommendation from a trusted provider significantly increases patient willingness.
- Offering a demo/technical assistance can help curb patient nerves and encourage a digital visit.
- Patient schedule alignment and patient cost savings opportunity.

Use Follow-Ups

- After a telehealth session, follow up with a message or call to check in and reinforce the value of the encounter and obtain timely feedback.
- Continuous care can be supplemented with in-person care and outreach.

4. Make It Routine

Integrate Telehealth into Standard Scheduling

- Offer telehealth as the default option for certain types of visits (e.g., follow-ups, medication management).
- Include other members of the care team, if/as appropriate.
- Consistent workflows and platform accessibility can assist with long-term adoption.

Simplify Appointment Booking

- Allow patients to schedule online or via a mobile app, with automated reminders and links.
- Schedule the next appointment prior to concluding the session.
- Educate on separate telehealth options, if/as available.

Strategies:

5. Offer Options and Support Usage

Offer Options

- Offer a wide range of telehealth and virtual care services:
 - On-demand, virtual care (24/7)
 - Case example: [Billings Clinic OnCall](#)
 - Traditional telemedicine
 - Direct to Patient
 - Remote Patient/Therapeutic Monitoring
 - Hospital at Home
 - Interprofessional Consults
 - Others

Use TelePresenters, Site Facilitators, Care Navigators, CHWs, and/or Provider and Patient Champions

- Staff or peer volunteers can guide hesitant patients through the process and offer live support.

6. Monitor and Adapt

Collect Feedback

- Use short post-visit surveys to identify and address pain points.
- Patient Family Advisory Committee- great feedback venue for pre and post launch.

Track Participation Trends

- Look at who is and isn't using telehealth to identify and support underserved groups and services.
- Understand volumes and patient wants/desires.
- Regulatory considerations: what is new, changing, etc.

Promoting Patient Engagement via Telehealth

Patient independence and coordination of care are the base functions of high-quality telehealth services.



Promotion Tactics:

1. Personalize the Experience

- **Know the patient:** Use EHR data or intake forms to understand preferences, health literacy, and goals.
 - Include the care team and specialists.
- **Customize communication:** Adapt tone and content based on age, language, or cultural background.
- **Shared decision-making:** Invite the patient to weigh in on treatment plans or care priorities.

2. Strengthen the Provider-Patient Connection

- **Warm virtual presence:** Maintain eye contact, speak clearly, show your badge, and use the patient's name.
- **Active listening:** Pause to allow questions and acknowledge concerns.
- **Use the teach-back method:** Ask patients to explain the care plan in their own words.

3. Optimize Technology for Engagement

- **Easy access:** Use platforms with minimal setup and mobile compatibility.
 - Meet with the patient and offer solutioning.
- **Integrate interactive features:** Chat, screen sharing, and remote patient monitoring tools.
- **Pre-visit tech checks:** Offer a practice run or onboarding session with tech support.

4. Encourage Ongoing Communication & Care

- **Post-visit summaries:** Share clear notes and instructions via patient portals or email.
- **Messaging follow-ups:** Encourage use of secure messaging for questions or updates.
- **Reminders and nudges:** Use SMS, email, or app notifications for appointments and care actions (e.g., taking meds, doing exercises).

Promotion Tactics:

5. Provide Tools for Self-Management

- **Apps and trackers:** Recommend health apps or devices (e.g., blood pressure cuffs, glucose monitors) linked to telehealth- RPM/RTM.
 - Diabetes patches linked to smart phone
 - Data supports patient education and decision-making
- **Educational resources:** Share videos, articles, or support groups tailored to the patient's condition.
- **Goal setting:** Collaboratively set health goals and track progress over time.

6. Support Digital Literacy and Access

- **Digital literacy programs:** Offer brief training or partner with community resources.
- **Accessible platforms:** Ensure tools comply with accessibility standards (e.g., large fonts, voice commands).
- **Checking connection in advance:** Test drive the telehealth visit with the patient prior to the actual visit
 - Digital forms

7. Operationally: Create a Robust Feedback Loop

- **Short surveys or polls** after visits to gather feedback and guide future use cases and workflows
 - Internally
 - Externally
- **Patient advisory boards** for telehealth to co-create solutions with users.
- **Anecdotal patient stories** can provide trusted stories from different use cases.

Bonus Tip:

Empower care partners (e.g., family members, caregivers) to participate in the telehealth visit if the patient desires — especially valuable for older adults or those with complex conditions.

Questions & Discussion

Jody Haines

Director of Telehealth Services, Billings Clinic &
Eastern Montana Telemedicine Network

JHaines1@BillingsClinic.org

406.579.3543