**How to Educate Your Patients about Telemedicine**

Most patients in this technology driven world will be receptive to telemedicine for convenience and flexibility but may not fully understand how telemedicine will benefit them or how it works. Take the time to explain in detail and provide more education to those who require it. Be patient and take the time to allow them to understand how this can improve their time and in many cases their access to care.

**Explain –** Telemedicine allows face-to-face visits using audio and video over the internet, rather than the patient traveling to the clinic. A telemedicine visit in many cases is equal to an in-office appointment where symptoms, test results, prescriptions, follow-up care and treatments are discussed and in some cases the patient is examined.

**Sell –** Provide information on the time saved by not having to travel. Provide examples of patient experiences and then demonstrate how it works. Provide information on insurance coverage prior to scheduling for an appointment.

**Reassure –** Provide the patient with the option of an in-person visit. Remind the patient the connection is encrypted with privacy protection and HIPAA compliant.

**Getting Patient Buy-In**

Once you platform is up and running, and the staff have been trained, a mock visits is completed then next step will be to get patient buy-in. The most valuable marketing will come from your staff who regularly interact with the patients, therefore it is important those individuals understand how and when to talk about telemedicine to patients.

* During scheduling, offer telemedicine as a time saving option, if appropriate.
* For returning patients, offer this new option for follow up appointments.
* Provide marketing materials such as handouts, brochures, signage introducing telemedicine.
* Utilize social media to educate and inform your patients of this option.
* Contact local media outlets to see if there is interest in covering your new “high-tech” system for patient care.

**How to Ensure a Positive Telemedicine Experience**

Telemedicine does not replace face-to-face provider-patient interactions, but can make them more accessible. Patients may be able to see practitioners from their computers or smart devices, making it important to present a professional, secure environment.

Best practices that ensure the patient experience’s top quality care, from where ever the visit is located:

* Test your equipment prior to starting your clinic to ensure everything is in working order, both the patient and provider equipment.
* Know where to get technical assistance.
* Make eye contact with the camera so the patient feels that the provider is looking directly at them.
* Discourage interruptions by suggesting children, pets, televisions or other distractions are removed from the area during the call.
* Control the background so the patient sees the professional in a professional environment.
* Have the right technical infrastructure to enable you to have access to the patient information, while interviewing or examining the patient,
* Eliminate distractions on the providers end as if this were an in person visit.
* Wear solid, neutral colors. Avoid fluorescent colors, bright reds and whites and detailed patterns. Dress appropriately, even if you are working outside of your office or after/before clinic hours.
* Jewelry, such as earrings, should be relatively small and non-distracting.
* Keep hand motions to a minimum as they can be distracting on a video visit.
* Minimize natural light by not sitting in front of a bright window. If the room is backlit, the provider or patient will appear dark on camera and it will be difficult to visualize the patient or provider.
* Speak in a normal voice without shouting or talking too quietly. Ask the patient if they can hear you well before proceeding with the appointment.
* Share tips with patients about how they can follow many of these same steps for the best possible telemedicine experience.
* Always introduce yourself as if you were in the same room with the patient. Explaining what the role is of the person conducting the assessment/exam of the patient and the affiliation with the clinic the patient would be visiting if in person.
* Introduce additional staff in telemedicine area (nurse, PA, clerk), ensure the patient knows who is the room.
* Follow the same HIPAA guidelines as if in a physical clinic.
* Ask who is in the room with the patient, ask permission to discuss sensitive information with the visitors in the room.
* Act as if you are in the room with the patient and while the camera is on at all times. Don’t assume the call has disconnected.
* While waiting on the patient to join, ensure the microphone is muted.
* Know the plan and Inform patient of a back-up plan if the technology is not working
* Have an emergency plan in place if patient needs emergency care.
  + Know the location of the nearest hospital
  + Know the EMS provider for the area
  + Have the someone at the location to call 911 while remaining connected to the patient