

## Focal Points of Mastering Telemedicine



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With telehealth seeing a boost due to the COVID-19 pandemic and expected to continue to grow in the future, what do healthcare professionals need to know to successfully work with this format?

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Since the start of the pandemic, many healthcare providers have found themselves in the need to switch to telecare. However, this shift to remote demands new skills and a novel perception of how care is delivered. Writing for the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), Kimberly Noel, MD, MPH, addresses this gap with several first-hand recommendations. According to Dr Noel, “physicians need to know when [telehealth] use is and is not appropriate. The medical community therefore has a duty to intensify its commitment to telehealth training”.

She lists the following essential skills and refers anyone interested to the AAMC’s new [report](#), Telehealth Competencies Across the Learning Continuum.

**‘Webside manner’ and other remote-specific skills.** Dr Noel advises to put additional efforts into adjusting medical encounters for virtual practice. She specifically points out the need for practitioners to ensure efficient collection of the patient history-related information. Technical aspects, which she calls a good ‘webside manner’, are also important. These include maintaining consistent eye contact with the camera, arranging proper lighting and ensuring the environment is ‘professional’ and the visit is not interrupted.

**Re-imagining the clinical encounter.** Remote technologies can bring multiple benefits to clinicians, and the latter should be aware of those benefits. They need to facilitate the process of self-monitoring by patients at home (e.g. measuring blood pressure) and educate them on how telecare works, ultimately aiming to turn the patient into “a partner in the remote physical”.

**Patient safety.** Meaningful conversations between doctors and patients may be key to escalating care when necessary. Providers must ensure that their patients clearly understand their conditions and ‘red-flag’ symptoms.

**Patient access and health equity.** With all its benefits, telehealth can further deepen health disparities. Providers need to be constantly aware of this and adjust their virtual processes accordingly so as to ensure access and equity for all patient populations.

**Privacy and security.** Even remotely, medical care must be ethical and in line with existing policies. Clinicians should get familiar with relevant legal and regulatory frameworks and convey the rules to their patients so that to preserve the latter’s privacy and security.

In conclusion, Dr Noel calls for all medical education facilities to “formally incorporate telehealth training into their curricula”, and providers to continue their medical education to ensure proper telehealth practices.

Source: [AAMC](#)

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