

# Effective telehealth communication



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# Disclosures

- I have no financial relationships with commercial interests to disclose



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By the end of this activity,  
participants will be able to:

- Describe challenges to telehealth visits
  - Identify and implement communication skills that enhance telehealth visits
  - Consider communication issues related to wearing personal protective equipment (PPE)
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# Communication with patients during Covid-19

- Telehealth visits
    - Video
    - Phone
  
  - Communication with PPE
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# Telehealth advantages

For patients and providers:

- Safety
  - Accessibility and travel
  - Time
  - Visual consultation and education
  - Team care (including learners)
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# Telehealth challenges

In breakout groups discuss:

- Challenges in telehealth encounters **for patients** (known or anticipated)
- Challenges in telehealth encounters **for healthcare providers** (known or anticipated)

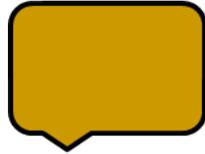
5 Minutes

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# Telehealth challenges

**In chat:**



- Type in one challenge in telehealth encounters **for patients** that you discussed
  - Type in one challenge in telehealth **for healthcare providers** that you discussed
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# Agenda

## Effective Telehealth communication

- Preparation
- Beginning
- Throughout
- Ending

PPE

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# Telehealth visits: Preparation

Before initiating call:

- **Take a breath** to ready yourself
- Make sure you are **comfortably seated**
- If possible, be **away from noisy areas**
- **Minimize distractions**, give your full attention

## For video visits:

Avoid distracting **visual backgrounds** – real or virtual

Have face **properly lit**, no back lighting

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# Telehealth visits: Beginning

## Introductions:

- **Identify** patient (and others), introduce self and role
- Confirm good time for call and **privacy/confidentiality**

## Technological check-in:

- **Acknowledge telehealth** especially if new to patient
- Can you and patient **hear (and see)**? – encourage repetition/questions

## For video visits:

Describe what will happen **if cut off** or does not work

# Telehealth visits: Beginning

## **Rapport building:**

- Make a personal connection
- Check in on how coping with current pandemic situation

## **Non-verbal communication:**

- Smile
- Warm tone of voice

## **For video visits:**

Eye contact: Periodically **look toward camera**, not just at the person's face on screen

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# Telehealth visits: Beginning

## Orientation:

- Describe your understanding of **visit purpose** and if appropriate, duration
- Signpost when looking at/typing in **medical record**
- **Encourage** asking for clarification

## Remember to start with **Agenda setting**

- *Let's start with a list of concerns you would like to discuss related to your knee... What else?*
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# Telehealth visits: Throughout

- **Listening**

- **Verbal acknowledgments**

- **Clarifications**

- *So I want to be sure I am understanding what you are saying. I heard you say that ...”*

- **Summarize** more frequently

## For video visits:

Be **more animated** with non-verbal acknowledgments

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# Telehealth visits: Throughout

## Respond to emotions

- Pick up on **emotional cues**
    - Phone: verbal statements, hesitations, sighing, etc
    - Video: watch patient/family member
  - **Explore** patient responses
    - *“I heard you hesitate when telling me about your recovery, can you tell me more about that?”*
  - Increase **explicit empathic statements**
    - *“That sounds really tough.”*
    - *“I know this has been a difficult time”*
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# Telehealth visits: Throughout

## Structure and pace

- **Speak slowly** and clearly
    - Pause after asking questions
  - Explicitly identify when **moving from one topic to another**
    - *Now that I have a good picture of what has been going on, I want to ask you some questions about your family medical history*
  - Avoid jargon
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# Telehealth visits: Explanation and Planning

Sharing information/ Patient education

- **Orient** patient to structure
    - *“I am going to tell you about 3 treatment options and their pros and cons.”*
  - Signpost when **moving to new topic**
    - *“Now that we have discussed your test results, I want to move on to talk about what this means for your medications”*
  - **Summarize frequently**
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# Telehealth visits: Explanation and Planning

- **Assess** patient starting point
  - *What do you know about inhalers?*
- **Respond**
  - *Sounds like you have some concerns about inhalers?*
- **Tell:** Chunk and check – **shorten chunks**
- **Ask: Check for questions/understanding** often
  - *What questions do you have so far?*

## For video visits:

Watch for cues of questions, misunderstanding

Use visual reinforcers – graphs, pictures, examples

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# Telehealth visits: Ending

- **Orient** the patient to the **end of the encounter**

*“We have just a few minutes left and I want to summarize and plan next steps.”*

- **Summarize**

- **Ask** for additional questions/concerns

*“We questions does that leave you with?”*

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# Telehealth visits: Ending

- Use **Teach-back** to assess patient understanding

*“Tell me what you understand you need to do to be ready for surgery?”*

- **Clarify** next steps, follow-up and where other information is available
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# Communication with PPE

PPE (Personal protective equipment) has similar communication challenges to Telehealth

- Need for increase in use of:
    - Explicit verbal empathy
    - Signposting different topics
    - Plain language
    - Summary
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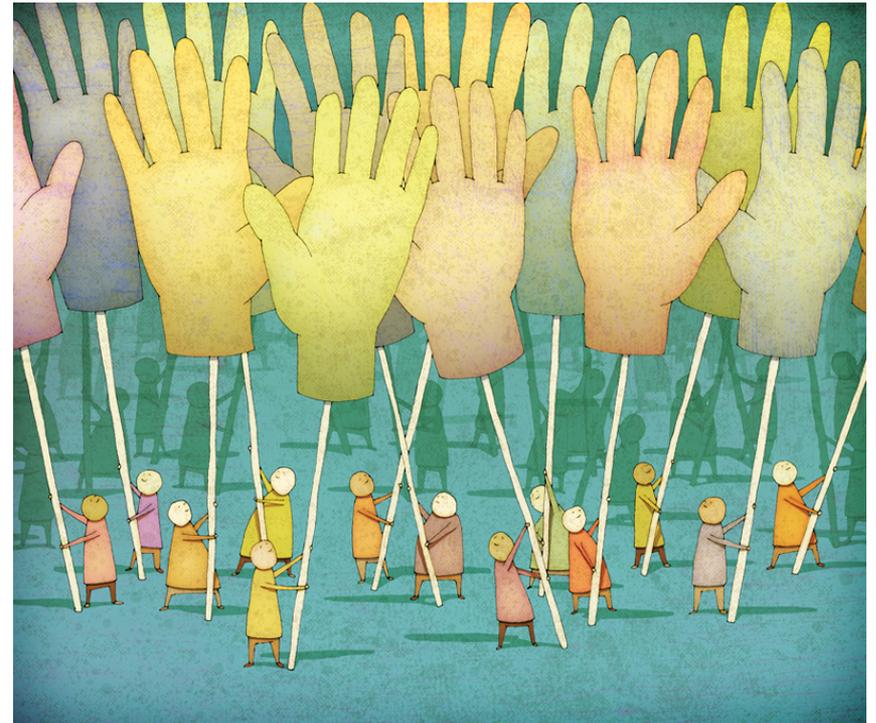
# Communicating with PPE

Challenges	Potential Approaches
“You look like an alien!”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Wear clear photograph of <b>your smiling face</b></li><li>■ Establishing <b>rapport</b></li><li>■ <b>Acknowledge</b> safety measures:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ PPE</li><li>■ Handwashing</li><li>■ Not shaking hands/ distance</li></ul></li></ul>
Patient/family can't hear you clearly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <b>Practice</b> with PPE on</li><li>■ Encourage questions and keep <b>checking understanding</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ <i>“Please stop me if ...”</i></li></ul></li><li>■ <b>Slow down</b></li><li>■ <b>Written aids:</b> Digital flashcards, stickers, whiteboard<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="https://www.cardmedic.com/flashcards">https://www.cardmedic.com/flashcards</a></li><li>• <a href="https://www.bsms.ac.uk/about/news/2020/05-07-memojis-help-frightened-children-facing-nurses-in-ppe.aspx">https://www.bsms.ac.uk/about/news/2020/05-07-memojis-help-frightened-children-facing-nurses-in-ppe.aspx</a></li></ul></li></ul>

# Questions/discussion

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