Potential Challenges with Telehealth Education

by Capella Healthcare

≡ WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about potential challenges with telehealth education. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Introduction
2. Technology Accessibility
3. Technology Savviness
4. Language Barriers
5. Relevance
6. Reflect: Assessing Potential Areas for Telehealth Education in Your Practice

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1. Introduction

As with anything, known challenges have emerged within telehealth education. As a provider, you will want to make sure telehealth is available for all your patients. This may take some advance planning, especially when your primary patient population is in an underserved, rural, or older community. It is important to consider the following logistical issues as you are developing your program, so you can plan around them, as applicable, should they impact your community. The goal is, of course, to ensure inclusivity for all your patients.

2. Technology Accessibility

In some remote areas, access to reliable internet can be a challenge. Patients who disproportionally face barriers to telehealth tend to be older patients, patients of color or Tribal affiliation, patients for whom English is not their first language, patients who live in rural areas, or patients of low socioeconomic status.

If the patient lacks audio or video capabilities, determine if their insurance company will reimburse for telephone encounters at the same rate as video visits. To help address these accessibility situations, consider identifying some local resources or places that may be able to provide internet access or technology to facilitate a telehealth visit; Medicare Advantage plans may be able to facilitate loaning equipment.

There may also be assistance available at the federal and state level to access phones, computers, and other

technology and deploy interactive education materials to teach the basic digital literacy skills necessary to participate in a telehealth encounter. The Lifeline Program for Low-Income Consumers is a vital resource to assist patients to attain a discount on phone service. Social workers are also experts in knowing services that are available to assist patients and would be an excellent resource for you to reach out to.

Additionally, try to have a platform that works on smartphones since most of the population has them. If possible, consider choosing a platform that does not require patients to download additional software, since they may have limited data plans or insufficient storage on their devices.

3. Technology Savviness

Not everyone is familiar or comfortable with technology. This may be especially true for older patients. Heath (2019) reports that 47% of patients over the age of 50 did not feel they had the technology savviness to successfully access telehealth.

There are a number of ways to address this, some of which have already been mentioned in this course. Have a phone number patients can call with any questions. Consider hosting an open house that consists of a step-by-step walk-through of how to use the telehealth platform, focusing specifically on how to access the educational features. These extra support opportunities may assist those with less tech-savviness feel more comfortable and prepare for their telehealth education session or visit.

4. Language Barriers

If your patient population covers those that speak languages other than English, be sure to keep this in mind. If possible, plan to have a translator present on your telehealth education visit. Consider having printed and video materials available in both English and other languages, as applicable.

5. Relevance

Part of keeping the patient engaged is having relevant, up-to-date, and appropriate educational material. The resources should be curated for your patients. The materials should be relevant and specific to their needs. The information should be based on best practice and research, with links to supporting documentation (government agencies, professional association guidelines, peer-reviewed research, etc). The entire experience should be patient-friendly. If you have a pediatric patient population, integrate interactive components and colorful graphics. For seniors, use a larger font and bigger buttons.

There are several companies that have materials available that meet Health Literacy Guidelines such as Krames and Emmi. Krames has many YouTube videos and a large library of pamphlets and information for patients available for purchase on its website. Emmi has excellent videos that are short and cover a variety of healthcare topics that are in several formats to send via email, text, or have on the portal. Emmi can automatically link a video to a preventative test reminder to call the patient to action. These are just a few examples that are used widely for patient education.

6. Reflect: Assessing Potential Areas for Telehealth Education in Your Practice

[?] **REFLECT**

Consider your existing patient population.

1. What type of synchronous education opportunities would be helpful for your patients?

2. What type of asynchronous educational opportunities would be helpful for your patients?

3. What do you see as potential challenges with telehealth education, specific for your population? How can you plan in advance to address these?

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Support

If you are struggling with a concept or terminology in the course, you may contact **TelehealthSupport@capella.edu** for assistance.

If you are having technical issues, please contact **learningcoach@sophia.org**.