Developing a Strong 'Web-Side Manner' for Healthcare Providers using Video-Based Virtual Care

Compiled by the IC3RG – April 2020

https://www.dal.ca/sites/ic3rg.html

1. Ensure you have the proper tools:
- A headset microphone produces clearer sound than a built-in computer microphone.
- Technology should be compliant with local privacy laws.
- Ensure the patient has access to the high speed internet necessary for a video call.

2. Set the scene:
- Ensure a private, quiet room, free of visual and auditory distractions.
- Keep likely-needed tools or reference material close by.
- Ensure you are well-lit from the front.

3. Dress for success:
- Some clothing designs cause video images to flicker.
- Avoid fine pinstripes, patterns, tartans, or checkers.
- If you are using a green screen or virtual background, avoid green.
- If you typically wear glasses, test your camera with your glasses in the room you intend to use. Move lamps or lighting source to prevent glare.

4. Express empathy:
- Empathy is valued by patients, and more difficult to perceive over video.
- Start the conversating with some small talk, a feature patients appreciate that is often forgotten through video conference.
- Encourage the patient to ask questions.
- Increase your use of verbal empathic statements to enhance what is conveyed through body language and facial expressions.
- Avoid over-exuberant body language that can be distracting.
- When you are first starting, remember both you and the patient are new to this.

5. Check you tech:
- Before starting, check the self-view to see what the patient sees.
- At the beginning of the session, confirm with the patient that they can see and hear you, and that you can see and hear them.
- Establish a backup mode of communication, such as by phone, in case of technological disruption.
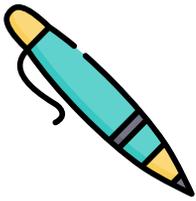
6. Mind your moves:
- Small distractions are often amplified by video and microphones.
- Avoid pen or leg tapping.
- Avoid coughing or clearing throat into the microphone.
- Avoid drinking coffee, water, etc. close to the microphone.
- Avoid movements that shake the camera.
- Keep in the frame, where the patient can see you.

7. Be aware of your eyes:
Eye contact can be extremely important for building trust, conveying empathy, and attentiveness, all of which enhance the therapeutic encounter. To promote eye contact:

- Place the camera at eye level.
- Use a webcam where the camera placement is aligned with the video feed. This displays the image of direct eye contact when you look at the patient. If this is not possible, look into the camera, rather than looking at other objects or images on the screen.
- When consulting other documents or charts on the screen, tell the patient what you are doing so they are aware you are not ignoring them.
  - Turn off the picture-in-picture feature so you look at the patient, not at yourself.
  - Aim camera at documents or education materials you are sharing with the patient.
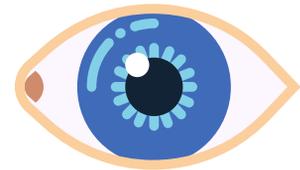
8. Find out more:
- Treat George Jetson: Video chat for better patient care. https://doi.org/10.2337/diaspect.26.4.215
- Rapidly converting to 'Virtual Practices": Outpatient care in the era of Covid-19 DOI: 10.1056/CAT.20.0091
- I'm not feeling like I'm part of the conversation": Patients; perspectives on communicating in clinical video telehealth visits https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-020-05673-w
- Telemedicine Is Forcing Doctors to Learn 'Webside' Manner. https://www.wired.com/story/telemedicine-is-forcing-doctors-to-learn-webside-manner/
- Improve your webside manner: Tips for virtual visits https://consultqd.clevelandclinic.org/improve-your-webside-manner-tips-on-virtual-visits/

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