DTO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Virtual Care for Physicians and MOAs

Contents

Updated: 2020-04-08

Overview

This document is intended as a resource guide for physicians and MOAs and covers only the most general questions related to virtual care. Given that each practice and their specific needs are unique, there are many topics that may not be fully addressed. Do not hesitate to contact the Doctors Technology Office (DTO) for further questions, clarification or support using the contact details provided at the bottom of this page.

For technical related issues, your vendor's Help Desk should be the first point of contact. If all avenues of support have been exhausted and the issues remains unresolved, DTO can act as a resource to provide assistance and facilitate escalations as needed.

DTO Virtual Care Enablement Program

Supporting the implementation of virtual care across the province with:

- **Virtual Care Peer Support Network**: a network of Physician and MOA Peer Mentors to support their colleagues, and/or help facilitate webinars and learning sessions.
- **Webinar Series**: regular webinars will be offered to support you with getting started and optimizing use of virtual care. A list of available webinars can be found here.
- **Virtual Care Learning Series:** a set of video tutorials and real-life physician and MOA case studies on how to optimize the use of common virtual care tools.

DTO is looking for Virtual Care Physician and MOA volunteers who have experience using virtual care tools or workflows. Please reach out to DTO if you are interested in supporting peers with implementing virtual care.

✉ DTOinfo@doctorsofbc.ca

Virtual Care Resources

- **DTO Virtual Care Quick Start Guide:** An overview of the foundational processes, tools, and templates that a clinic should have to implement virtual care.
- **Virtual Care Toolkit:** For a deeper dive on implementing Virtual Care in your practice including comparisons of commonly used tools, templates and tools to help clinics navigate patient consent, common billing codes for GPs, and communicating with patients.
- **[Shareable PDF for Patients] Virtual Care Frequently Asked Questions:** Information to help patients prepare for virtual care visits. Designed for clinics to share with their patients as a resource guide.
- **[Poster for Patients] Clinic Providing Virtual Care Visits During COVID-19:** Editable/printable poster (MS Word) that can be used by clinics to notify patients that virtual visits are being offered, either over the phone or through video. There is room for the clinic to fill out their email, phone number, and clinic name. This can be posted on the clinic entrance and/or in the waiting area; it can also be added to clinic websites.

Updates to this guide will be made on an as-needed basis, please check back here for the most recent version.

Doctors Technology Office (DTO) is here to support you, please reach out with your virtual care questions to:
📞 604 638-5841 ✉ DTOinfo@doctorsofbc.ca 🌐 doctorsofbc.ca/DTO

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IMPLEMENTATION

Which virtual care tool should I choose?

There are many different virtual care platforms on the market that vary with respect to cost, functionality, privacy and security, workflow and user interface. There are also differences in the device requirements to run a tool (e.g. Windows operating system only) and whether any downloads are required (web-based vs. app-based), which can impact workflow and accessibility. In the Tools section of the [DTO Virtual Care Toolkit](), you will find a high-level overview of some of the tools that have been used in BC. Email [dtoinfo@doctorsofbc.ca]() or reach out to your EMR vendor to find out if your EMR vendor offers any tools. We recommend speaking with your colleagues, Division of Family Practice, Health Authority (if applicable) and/or DTO to discuss your options.

Does the virtual care tool need to be integrated into EMR?

Not every EMR vendor offers virtual care tools at this time (although some are in progress). Some EMR vendors may also have the ability to integrate with third-party vendors. If your EMR does offer virtual care capabilities, you should consider the difference in workflow compared to using a tool that is outside of your EMR. DTO has summaries of virtual care capabilities for the majority of EMR vendors and you can email [dtoinfo@doctorsofbc.ca]() to find out more.

What telehealth solutions meet recommended security standards for protecting privacy?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare professionals have been instructed to use any tools necessary to communicate with patients and ensure continuity of care, provided that they obtain informed consent around potential risks.

On March 20, 2020, a [new ministerial order]() was issued in BC that allows broader use of communication tools for healthcare workers and other government agencies who are responding to the COVID-19 state of emergency. This overrides current [Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act (FIPPA)]() section that requires personal information of citizens to be stored in and only accessed from within Canada.

For examples and a comparison of tools that could be use to enable remote care during COVID-19, please see the Tools section of the [DTO Virtual Care Toolkit]()

How much testing should be done before I start using virtual care with patients?

Testing will provide opportunities, in a controlled environment, to troubleshoot any issues that physicians, clinic staff, and/or patients may encounter. We recommend testing with a colleague, staff member, family member, friend etc. before using with a patient. Where possible, we also recommend testing the virtual care tool on different

devices, operating systems and web browsers, as these may yield different results and prompt patients with different pop-up screens, such as to download and install an application or to register for an account.

Do you have any information on the approximate costs for the various virtual care solutions?

Virtual Care pricing varies depending on a number of factors including number of licenses, usage (e.g. number of participants or duration of services allowed), service model, customization, length of contract, etc. Some of the tools are free of charge – refer to the section on Tools section in the [DTO Virtual Care Toolkit](#) for a list of options. For tools that are not free, you will need to contact the vendor directly for a personalized quote. Be sure to also ask about other services that the vendor may charge for, such as IT support and training, custom reporting, and data analytics, as these costs can also vary among vendors.

Is there any funding available to physicians to implement virtual care?

Here is an overview of some options that may be available to you:

- PHSA is providing ZOOM for Healthcare licenses to providers that are affiliated with BC Health Authorities. [Click here to Register.](#)
- The Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues (JSC) is also offering rural physicians in BC the option to have access to a ZOOM

for Healthcare license. Please refer to the [RCCBC website](#) to find out how to sign up and get started.

In some instances, licenses for virtual care tools or equipment may also be available through your local Division of Family Practice. We recommend that you contact them directly to find out whether any options are available. DTO is also working in collaboration with Specialist Services Committee to offer videoconferencing licenses to specialists that are not affiliated with a Health Authority. More communications will be released as these become available.

How can I treat a patient that does not have a smartphone, tablet, or computer?

Providing virtual care can be as simple as a phone call. During the pandemic, it is critical that physicians use the tools available to them and their patients to maintain their practice through the use of telephone (and video calls) and see only a small minority of patients in-person. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, payment for telehealth services have been updated to allow the use of telephone, *without video*, when providing services which can be billed under Telehealth fees. Please see the [COVID-19 temporary billing changes](#) article on the Doctors of BC website for more details.

How can I ensure that I am meeting my medical-legal obligations when providing virtual care services during the pandemic?

The CMPA has a dedicated COVID-19 Hub to provide information, advice and support related to medical-legal protection during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please refer here for regular updates and answers to frequently asked questions, including those related to telehealth and virtual care.

How can we let patients know about changes to our in-person services?

Doctors of BC has developed a variety of templates that clinics can use to inform patients about how they can continue to access care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- [Shareable PDF for Patients] Virtual Care Frequently Asked Questions – This PDF provides patients with an overview on virtual care, including why the clinic is transitioning to phone and video visits, info about how to prepare, answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) and technical troubleshooting tips.

- [Poster for Patients] Clinic Providing Virtual Care Visits During COVID-19 – This editable poster (MS Word) can be used by clinics to notify patients that some of their care may be delivered virtually, either over the phone or through video. Clinics can fill in their name, phone number, email and website

address and post this notice on the clinic door, website and/or waiting area.

DTO's resource list will continuously be updated as more information become available, so please check back regularly: Doctors Technology Office - Virtual Care Resources.

PRIVACY

When is verbal patient consent acceptable and how to we record it?

Physicians must obtain valid informed consent from patients prior to using videoconferencing or electronic communication to communicate potentially sensitive personal health information. This can be done during the first virtual care visit and can be applied to all subsequent sessions, provided that informed consent has been clearly documented in the patient chart. Refer to the DTO Virtual Care Toolkit for a template that can be copied into the EMR. Consent may be revoked by the patient at any time.

Informed consent may involve the following components:

- explaining the appropriateness, limitations and privacy issues related to telemedicine or electronic communication with the patient
- explaining the risks related to unauthorized disclosure or interception of personal health information and steps they can take to help protect their information.
- discussing that care provided through video or audio cannot replace the need for

physical examination or an in person visit for some disorders or urgent problems;

- informing the patient if their personal information will be used for any purpose outside the 'circle of care' i.e. for research, teaching or to send promotional materials and;
- confirming that the patient understands the need to seek urgent care in an Emergency Department or Urgent Primary Care Centre as necessary.

Where are the best places to get consent form templates?

The Canadian Medical Protective Association (CMPA) provides templates specifically for obtaining 'consent to use electronic communications. You can download these in PDF or Word doc formats.

BILLING

Where can I get all of my questions regarding new/revised fee codes during COVID-19 answered?

Please refer to the Doctors of BC COVID-19 Billing Changes webpage for a full list of temporary billing changes. You can also access the Billing Changes FAQ here. If you have questions or would like more information, please send an email to economics@doctorsofbc.ca.

WORKFLOW

What should I do if my patient requires an in-person assessment?

The College has released direction on assessing and managing patients by telemedicine during the COVID-19 crises (available here). Please refer to this resource for recommendations on approach and familiarize yourself with local protocols by contacting your Division of Family Practice.

How can I access my EMR remotely?

This functionality is dependent on the EMR system you're using. Reach out to your EMR vendor to discuss options. If your clinic is on the Physician Private Network (PPN), remote access to your EMR is most frequently provided via the PPN Virtual Private Network (VPN). The VPN uses a remote access token with two-factor authentication and encryption to enhance the security of the connection. If your EMR is not on the PPN, we still recommend using a VPN service to access your EMR remotely. For temporary or intermittent use, please check with your anti-virus software provider as they may provide a free VPN solution in their package. You can also contact dtoinfo@doctorsofbc.ca for support choosing and implementing a VPN solution.

How can I send emails to my patients in bulk?

There are several options available for sending emails to patients in bulk which include mail marketing software, EMRs (check with your EMR vendor), and local email programs. The exact methods for doing so will depend on the solution you choose. More information on available solutions can be found in the Tools section of the DTO Virtual Care Toolkit. Regardless of which e-mail solution you use, we recommend following these best practices:

- Ensure that all recipient addresses are put in the 'Bcc' field and NOT the 'To' or 'Cc' fields. This will ensure that the recipients

cannot see who else the email was sent to. When sending emails to patients, ensure to use an appropriate business "reply-to" email address. You may need to setup a new email address to avoid using a personal email address to send and receive from.

PRESCRIPTIONS

How should I submit prescriptions after a telemedicine visit?

For non-controlled medications, the College is encouraging physicians to renew prescriptions by **phone or fax** to a pharmacy following a phone conversation or telemedicine visit with a patient to eliminate the need for a patient to obtain an original paper prescription with a wet signature, which they then have to take to a pharmacy. It is not acceptable to text or email photographs of prescriptions from a phone as photographs contain patient information and these are retained (often on cloud-based servers in other countries), which inevitably increases the risk of an information/privacy breach. Please refer to the College website for the most current updates on prescribing medications. DTO also has a Guide to eFaxing From Home to provide an overview of workflows and tools for submitting prescriptions remotely.

Can I use a digital signature on a prescription?

During the pandemic, when submitting a prescription electronically (i.e. e-fax), either a **real-time digital signature** created with a mouse or stylus (preferred) or an **electronic signature** (single, stored image) on a prescription may be accepted. The prescriber's current phone number and license number

must also be listed. For more guidance on how to add a digital signature to a prescription please refer to DTO's Guide to eFaxing From Home.

Have the rules for dispensing of controlled medications changed?

During the pandemic, it is now acceptable for registrants to fax prescriptions or give verbal prescriptions for controlled drugs to pharmacists over the phone, and then deliver a hard copy of the original duplicate form (by mail, courier or other means). This should only be done if the physician has a longitudinal relationship with a patient and understands their care needs. For information on prescribing during the COVID-19, please check the College website.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Where can I get support to setup virtual care solutions at home?

For technical issues that are related to a specific telehealth platform, the telehealth platform vendor should be the first point of contact. Your local clinic IT should also be able to provide advice and guidance and more general support and advice on set up and equipment for remote home services.

If your issue remains unresolved or needs escalation, DTO can help provide assistance by working with your telehealth platform vendor and your local IT and/or facilitate possible solutions.

If your clinic does not have an IT support vendor, there are many options available for remote IT support at home. Refer to the DTO IT Support Selection Checklist for tips on what to

ask when choosing an IT vendor for your home as well as your clinic. If you meet a challenge that you and your locally hired IT technician cannot solve, please contact DTO for further guidance.

Does the Private Physician Network (PPN) support video visits?

Some videoconferencing may work with little to no issues over the PPN while others may pose some challenges. We recommend testing a platform on the PPN before going live. If you experience issues, please contact PHSA for support at ppnadmin@phsa.ca and they will work with you to troubleshoot network issues. If issues remain unresolved, reach out to DTO and we will do our best to see how we can support videoconferencing over the PPN.

What should I do if my bandwidth is too low for videoconferencing?

If you are using the Physician Private Network (PPN) and your connection is slow, you can contact your EMR vendor as a first point of contact to investigate and troubleshoot bandwidth issues.

If you are not on the PPN and think your bandwidth is too low, work with your local IT for guidance and here are some steps you can take:

- First, run a speed test on your computer or the device you are using for the video session. There are many free services online to help with this including from known local internet providers like Telus (https://www.telus.com/en/nl/support/article/speed-test)

  - o If your **upload** speed is 5 Mbps or under, you may need to contact your internet service provider to discuss options for upgrading to 10-30 Mbps **upload** speed or higher.
  - o **Download** speeds of 30 Mbps or higher are generally acceptable for video visits.
- If you appear to need more bandwidth, contact your local Internet Service Provider (ISP) and review options for upgrading your internet plan.
- If you already have an internet package that should support video visits but still experience bandwidth issues, adjust your local network and computer if needed:
  - o If possible, try using a hard-wired (ethernet) connection to your router or modem instead of using Wi-Fi.
- If using Wi-Fi, try to be in the same room as the router or use a Wi-Fi extender device.
- Turn off other devices or internet usage in the home that can use bandwidth during video sessions (e.g. streaming HD video or downloading large files or updates).
- Check the settings in your videoconferencing software to see if additional unnecessary features, or High Definition (HD) streaming can be turned off.
- Refer to DTO's [Wireless Network Best Practices Guide for Clinics](#).

RESOURCES

What virtual care supports and resources are available?

Doctors Technology Office and its partners are working together to continuously update and add new supports and resources to help clinicians implement virtual care solutions during the pandemic. The [DTO website](#) contains

the most up-to-date information so please check back regularly.

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada is also compiling province-specific quick links for virtual care ([here](#)). We also recommend that you contact your local Division of Family Practice to find out what supports may be available for your community.

How can I request 1:1 support for implementing virtual care?

DTO and the Practice Support Program (PSP) are mobilizing a network of physicians, MOAs and the PSP Regional Support Team members to deliver virtual at-the-elbow coaching services on virtual care. For more information or to request one-on-one support from a PSP regional support team coach or peer mentor, email DTOinfo@doctorsofbc.ca.

Will this FAQ be updated?

Yes, this FAQ will continue to be updated over time, please check back [here](#) for the most recent version.