Position Statement

Telehealth and Respiratory Therapy

Telehealth, also called telemedicine or virtual care, is an interactive audio, video, or similar electronic communication system that allows face-to-face communication between a patient or healthcare team and a remote healthcare provider(s). The goal of telehealth is to improve access to quality healthcare. Telehealth can be used to provide a variety of services, including:

- Primary and specialty care: provide follow-up for previously diagnosed conditions, especially chronic disease management and other care services.
- Mental health care: provide counseling or other mental health services. Respiratory therapists (RT) can conduct mental health counseling by using a variety of techniques, such as:
    - Active listening: This involves paying close attention to what the patient is saying and reflecting on their thoughts and feelings.
    - Empathy: This involves showing the patient that you understand and care about their situation.
    - Problem-solving: This involves helping the patient to identify and develop solutions to their problems.
    - Referral: If the patient's emotional distress is severe or if the RT is not comfortable providing counseling, they may refer the patient to a mental health professional.
- Education: provide patient education, training for healthcare providers, and other educational services.
- Remote monitoring: monitor patients' health remotely, including interpretation of health data from wearable devices.

Telehealth includes remote patient monitoring conducted via a coordinated system that uses one or more home-based or mobile monitoring devices to transmit vital signs or other health information wirelessly. This information is then reviewed and interpreted by a healthcare professional and becomes part of the patient's plan of care. Respiratory therapists who transmit protected electronic health information (EHI) must comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Security Rule.

Telehealth provided by respiratory therapists may include but is not limited to:

- Patient assessment
- Diagnostic evaluation
- Sleep testing and/or interface acclimation
- Home ventilator monitoring and management
- Positive airway pressure therapy initiation and monitoring
- Monitoring patient health and activities

9425 N. MacArthur Blvd., Ste 100, Irving TX 75063 T 972.243.2272 W www.aarc.org

- Treatment planning to assist patients in managing their chronic conditions
- Education on disease prevention, health, and wellness promotion
- Cardiopulmonary rehabilitation
- Patient consultations
- Interprofessional consultations

The American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) supports efforts to provide patients with access to respiratory care via telehealth and supports the recognition of respiratory therapists as providers of telehealth. [1,2,3,4,5]

References

1. Perkins RC, Davis J, NeSmith A, Bailey J, Powers MR, et al. Favorable clinician acceptability of telehealth as part of the cystic fibrosis care model during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Annals of the American Thoracic Society* 2021, 18(9), 1588-1592. https://doi.org/10.1513/annalsats.202012-1484rl
2. Pierce M, Gudowski S, Roberts K, Jackominic A., et al. The rapid implementation of ad hoc tel-critical care respiratory therapy (eRT) service in the wake of the COVID-19 surge. J.Clin. Med 2022, 11(3), 718-729: http://doi.10.3390/jcm11030718
3. Sawadkar MM, Nayak VR. Telehealth: the role of the respiratory therapists during COVID-19 emergency. Can J Respir Ther 2021, 57, 119-120. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8372871/
4. Zumstein KK, Lamphere TR, Powell SA, Solly WR, et. al. Using tele-ICU to provide respiratory therapy students experience with COVID-19 patients. *Respiratory Care* 2021, 66 (suppl 10) 3604761: https://rc.rcjournal.com/content/66/Suppl_10/3604761
5. Bryant MS, Fedson SE, Sharafkhaneh A. Using telehealth cardiopulmonary rehabilitation during the COVID-19 pandemic. *J Med Syst* 44, 125 (2020): https://doi.org/10.1007/s10916-020-01593-8

Effective: 12/97
Revised: 07/07
Revised: 10/2017
Revised: 09/2022
Revised: 11/2023