

## Telehealth and Respiratory Therapy

Telehealth is an interactive audio and video communication system designed to improve patients' health status by allowing face-to-face communication between patients at an originating site and physicians, and other health care providers, at a distant site. Telehealth, in addition to clinical services, also refers to remote non-clinical services such as provider training, administrative meetings, and continuing medical education. Telemedicine is the use of medical information exchanged from one site to another via electronic communications to improve a patient's clinical health status. The terms "telemedicine" and "telehealth" are often used interchangeably.

Additionally, telehealth includes remote patient monitoring conducted via a coordinated system that uses one or more home-based, or mobile, monitoring devices to automatically transmit vital signs or other information wirelessly. This information is then reviewed and interpreted by a health care professional and becomes part of the patient's plan of care. Store and forward telehealth, sometimes referred to as asynchronous telehealth, involves the acquisition and storing of clinical information such as data, images, sound, or video that can then be forwarded to (or retrieved by) a distant site for clinical evaluation.

Telehealth provided by respiratory therapists may include:

- Patient assessment and education
- Diagnostic evaluation
- Sleep testing
- Home ventilator monitoring and management
- Monitoring patient health and activities
- Managing patients with chronic conditions
- Disease prevention
- Health promotion
- Rehabilitation
- Patient 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.

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