Telehealth:
How to Get Started

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How to get started:

1. **Discuss with your team**
   a. Which team members want to get involved? Who is comfortable using a video conferencing program and connecting with patients remotely? Who will take on the responsibility of scheduler vs. provider?
   b. What telehealth education and/or care services do you want to prioritize (ie, feeding and nutrition, general cleft care, speech therapy, oral health education, psychosocial support, orthodontic check-ins)?
   c. Can you offer any education events for a group of patients (ie, leveraging Facebook Live)?
   d. Can you encourage *more patients* to get involved in speech therapy, oral health education, and psychosocial support programs than what you normally have on site?
   e. Establish team goals and commit together to offering highest standard of care.

2. **Decide what technology is best**
   a. Survey patients to see what technology is available and what programs are most accessible to them.
   b. Common options are Facebook, Google Hangout, Skype, Zoom, WhatsApp – many of which are free (with some limitations on the time) and can be used on phones, tablets, or computers through data or Wi-Fi.
   c. Develop simple guides for patients about the technology and programs you decide to use.
      i. Page 3's "Tips and Tricks" can be copied and adapted with more specific information for your team.
   d. Decide who is the point "technology expert" to guide any practitioner or patient having issues.

3. **Understand local laws and policies**
   a. Research any changes necessary for patient consent, medical insurance, and privacy laws as a result of offering telehealth services.
   b. For programs supported by Smile Train, patients must sign the organization's consent forms available in Smile Train Express. Contact your local Smile Train manager for more information.

4. **Design a workflow for outreach, scheduling, and documentation**
   a. Write very clear instructions for every team member, considering the process for adding and discharging patients and creating and cancelling appointments.
   b. Decide on required documentation and how/when team members must submit.
   c. For programs supported by Smile Train, practitioners must complete Smile Train reporting forms regularly. Contact your local Smile Train manager for more information.

5. **Reach out to patients and get started!**
   a. Invite patients to participate as determined by your team's resources. Have a set of criteria to enroll patients (ie, technology, connection, family support, commitment to service).
   b. Clearly communicate the expectations you have for patient participation.
   c. Send consent forms, technology instructions, and schedule reminders in advance of the appointment(s).

Practitioners | Tips and Tricks:

Good Practice

- Be available a few minutes earlier than the scheduled appointment (also, leave some free time between appointments).
- Be prepared to help the patient troubleshoot technology.
- Ask that the patient's caregiver is close by, if not involved (depending on age).
- Review the patient's chart in advance and write progress notes during/at the end of each session.
- Speak slowly and clearly in the direction of the camera.

Technology

- Always test your technology before each session begins.
- Try to be plugged in (phone, tablet, laptop) to avoid power failure.
- Try to use hard-wired connection, if possible (instead of wifi); if that is not possible, try to be near the Wi-Fi router to have the strongest connection possible.
- Close other programs on your device to ensure optimal speed of your telehealth program.
- Use software/platform that you are familiar with and the patient has access to.
- Have extra headsets nearby.

Setup

- Be in a quiet space - close nearby windows and shut off air conditioners and fans to avoid background noise.
- Try to get the best lighting by keeping it above/in front of you (not behind you); close blinds and drapes to prevent shadows and glares.
- Sit in a chair at a table (as opposed to be a bed or a couch).
- Try to have neutral space behind you and your face take up most of the screen.

On Camera

- Dress appropriately and avoid distracting jewelry or accessories.
- Avoid too much movement.
- Keep focused on the patient and avoid looking at your picture on the screen.

Patients | Tips and Tricks:

Setup

- Find a quiet, private and neat space.
- Keep lighting overhead and/or in front of you, rather than behind you. Close blinds and drapes to prevent glares and shadows.

Technology

- Test your technology (phone, tablet, computer), telehealth program (Skype, Zoom, Google Hangout), and connection in advance of every session.
- Have your device plugged in or the charger nearby.
- Have the practitioner's or "help" phone number nearby, just in case something goes wrong.

Sound and Camera

- Adjust your camera so you fill most of the screen.
- Turn off other possible noisemakers that are nearby (ie, air conditioners, television) and shut nearby windows if there is outside noise.
- Make sure the microphone is not blocked.
- Try to look at your practitioner's face while in session (not yourself).
- Speak slowly and clearly in the direction of the camera.

Take a deep breath

- If applicable, review your last session's outcomes and recommendations.
- Relax and be prepared to engage.