



Best Practices in Telehealth: How to Launch a Successful Telehealth Program

Healthcare providers of all types and sizes are embracing telehealth as a way to provide safe and convenient health care to patients while increasing revenue. With the impact of COVID-19 on in-office healthcare visits, telehealth has never been more popular. Today's technology makes it easy to accomplish this and more with little upfront investment and simple deployment options. There are, however, a few important steps you can take to make the addition of telehealth in your practice a success and avoid some common pitfalls.

Here are some of the best practices for launching a telehealth program:



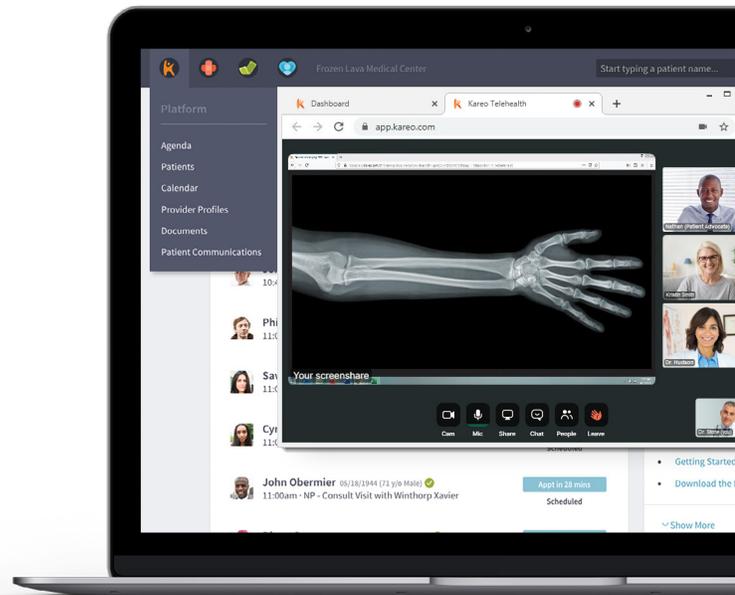
Define Your Strategy and Goals

To start, it is important to outline exactly what you hope to get out of your telehealth program. You should set goals related to measurable objectives such as revenue, wait times, number of no-shows, customer satisfaction scores, administrative costs, and any other outcomes that are important to your practice. By doing this, you'll be able to assign a value to your telehealth program and measure your success. Once your program is off and running, don't forget to look back at your goals and frequently measure your performance so that you can make adjustments if needed. Be sure to recognize and reward your team when objectives are reached.



Assemble a Team

Telehealth has the potential to impact a number of functional areas within the practice, so it makes sense to gather a small project team to oversee the roll-out. Usually this involves any providers who will use the technology, including: appointment schedulers, accounting, technical resources if you have them, and other business functions that might be able to help, such as marketing. Making one person the project leader is an effective way to make sure that the project runs smoothly.





Understand Rules, Regulations & Reimbursement

In 2020 legislators, the CMS and private payers eased telehealth regulations and increased the number of telehealth procedures that are now fully reimbursable. This has greatly expanded providers ability to deliver much needed care. However, with that said, there is still a large degree of inconsistency, so you need to get to know any rules regarding which procedures can be conducted via telehealth, whether there are any limits on the services that can be provided and how payer reimbursement is approached in your state.



Select The Right Technology Partner

There are several types of telehealth technology on the market, with the most popular (and the most frequently reimbursed) method being live audio and video. You'll want to select a partner with a solution that will be easy for providers, staff and patients to use; highly secure and HIPAA compliant, and integrated with your EHR solution. The best solutions on the market also provide billing and reimbursement tools. Look for one that has a system to verify reimbursement eligibility before every visit. Finally, you'll need to make sure your partner will sign a HIPAA Business Associate Agreement.



Create a Utilization Strategy

It doesn't have to be complicated, but you do want to determine how you will offer telehealth to patients and will need to train staff to offer it when appropriate.



Develop Clinical Protocols

Create a list of patient concerns, specific to your practice, that telehealth is appropriate to use. Have all staff and physicians in your practice agree to this list so everyone can use it to guide decisions and determine if telehealth is the appropriate solution for a specific concern. These guidelines set a standard for when telehealth is appropriate in your office, removing any questions or gray areas from the process.



Select a Telehealth Schedule

You might consider blocking certain times of your day during the week for video visits. Try selecting times that work best for your patients. Experiment with blocking 2-3 days a week and 1-2 hours on each day to dedicate to telehealth. Morning or afternoon? Ask your patients and let them help you decide!

You may also consider making telehealth available to patients outside of normal office hours. Additional staff aren't needed to support after hours visits, making it easy to expand office hours and increase appointment volume without adding overhead.



Quick Tip: To increase utilization and revenue is to conduct follow up phone calls (which aren't usually reimbursable) by video (which often is reimbursable) instead.



Implement the Technology

Surprisingly enough, implementation is often the easiest part of the process. Modern cloud-based solutions require very little configuration, except some setup related to the integration with your EHR or practice management solution. Your vendor should be happy to offer any help that you need. Plan on setting aside some time for a bit of training to get all physicians and staff up to speed, but if you've selected a well designed telehealth technology, it should be a breeze.



Gather Feedback

Your patients and staff will give you good insight into the health of your telehealth program. One great way for patients to provide feedback is to simply close a video appointment by asking "How did you like seeing me over video today?". Allowing patients the time to provide feedback will give you insight into what patients really think, areas you and your staff could improve on and ways to talk about video visits to other patients.

Just as you want patients to be satisfied with video visits, physicians need their practice staff to be happy with the telehealth solution as well. Be sure to routinely check in with office staff on their thoughts on the telehealth workflow within the practice. Allow staff to ask questions and provide feedback or tips to improve the office workflow.

Our most successful clients set up a system for frequent feedback and invite a conversation around the approach.



Ensure Success

At the heart of telehealth is the fact that it does not replace face-to-face doctor-patient interactions, but makes them more accessible. Patients will be able to see practitioners from their computers or devices so it's important to present a professional, secure environment. Be sure to select a leader in telehealth software and deployment. Contact Kareo to learn how you can implement HIPAA secure video visits with full reimbursement into your practice. We offer everything you need to add a successful telehealth program in your practice from secure software, patient and staff education, and streamlined reimbursement so you can start booking appointments and get paid for them faster than you may think.



The Only Complete Technology Platform

Kareo offers the only cloud-based, clinical and business management technology platform dedicated to serving the unique needs of independent practices. Our software helps you find and engage with patients, run a smarter business, provide better care, and get paid faster. More than 55,000 healthcare providers rely on Kareo with nearly 150,000 users logging in to our software every day.

Visit <http://kareo.com/telehealth> to learn about the integrated software platform built for your success.