



Developing Your Webside Manner




Quick Tips for Great Telehealth

There is an art form to a good telehealth visit, just as there is an art form to a good in-person consult. For clinicians who struggle to read their patients even when in the same exam room, virtual visits will be equally as difficult. However, for those in tune with their emotional intelligence, transferring their talents for use over virtual mediums is a much smoother process, one in which a clinician can elevate their continuum of care in just a few short sessions.

Wherever your consultation skillset lands, Fuel Medical is here to help—consider this handy best-practice checklist to quickly adapt to the world of telehealth:

- 1. Choose software that is HIPAA compliant.** There may be times, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, that these rules may be relaxed, but if possible, it's best to get used to a technology platform that already has this security in place.
- 2. Prepare to do a test run with the technology you choose.**
 - a. Test the speed and quality of your WiFi.
 - b. Test the quality of the camera and microphone.
 - c. Make sure whatever device you are using is fully charged.
- 3. Check out your backdrop.** What do you have in view of the patient? Artwork? Garbage cans? A blank wall? Make your environment professional and try to align with your company brand.
 - a. Do you know how to blur the background in whatever software you are using? Less in the background is better because people don't get as distracted and can focus on you, the expert.
- 4. Dress up.** Proper attire with good grooming goes a long way.
- 5. How is your lighting?** Harsh lighting does not help. A lack of lighting hurts. An easy fix is a desk lamp that sits in front of you, but behind your computer is an excellent choice, as well. You could also invest in a cell phone ring light (they average \$15 on Amazon) and have GREAT lighting.
- 6. Note when it is a patient's first virtual visit.** Extra time should be allowed for IT issues to be resolved on their end and for proper rapport building from you while they get comfortable with the technology and process.
- 7. Be mindful of placement of the camera.** Placing the camera higher than eye level is a better angle than below. Avoid having to look down into the camera. Think about looking UP.
 - a. Be familiar with getting the patient into the camera's view, as well. They may be blurry or out of view, too.
- 8. When you start the session,** have a smile on your face before you hit a button. Keep it there until well after the patient has picked up. First impressions count, and this is yours.
- 9. Ask if there is anyone else present that may be outside your view** to ensure information is not being shared with individuals that should not hear that information.



10. **Practice the art of looking directly into your camera**, not at the patient's face, as often as possible. The patient will feel as if you are looking directly into their eyes and connect.
 - a. You should see a light at the top of your computer monitor. Look at that. Or, if you have an external camera, then that will be your focal point.
11. **Speak slowly**. Long pauses between the end of the patient's communication and the start of yours make interruptions and echoes non-events.
 - a. Technology such as Google Meet has closed captioning. Using this capability can be particularly helpful with patients
12. **Check in with the patient frequently** to ensure that they understand you. 
13. **Educate the patient and any family or caregivers** about the encounter and what to expect throughout the televisit.
 - a. Depending on the technology being used, consider showing a flowchart.
14. **Do not multi-task**. If you need to take notes, explain to the patient that you are writing down their comments but continue to look back into the camera (at the patient) any time you ask a question. Without foreknowledge, the patient will think you are doing something unrelated to their visit.
15. **Minimize all distractions** and interruptions. No staff member should be allowed to break the flow of conversation you have with your patient. All alerts such as cell phone rings, etc. should be put on mute.
16. **If someone else in the office sent the patient any paperwork**, make sure you are familiar with that in case there are questions. Know if anything still needs to be collected.
 - a. Be familiar with the verification of benefits so that you'll be able to inform the patient of any financial responsibility where appropriate. 
17. **Be mindful of time**. State specifically to the patient the amount of time at the beginning of the visit in a positive manner: "We get to spend the next 20 minutes together!" Alert the patient when time is waning. "Mr. Smith, I want to finish a few things now as we have five minutes left." 
18. **If you have any training videos that you want to have them review**, have those queued up so that they can see what you're talking about.
19. **As you are saying goodbye**, reiterate the positive gains in the patient's treatment plan that the virtual visit was able to accomplish.
20. **Put a smile on your face, look directly into the camera**—which will appear to be directly into the patient's eyes—say goodbye, and do not move as you disconnect. That last warm image will be the last impression of you by the patient. 