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1. Any idea of what will be allowed in terms of doing therapy across provinces within SA and even across borders?

At the moment, the Medici App is only available in the USA and South Africa, and both parties need to be using the same country app in order to connect across a border. This means that if a patient is in the UK, for example, they will not be able to use Medici since it is not available in the UK. There is some regulatory requirement around consulting to a patient in another country, which often includes being registered with the regulatory authority there. Just make sure that you are familiar with these before cross border consulting.

2. How do we get patients to buy in to Telehealth - virtual consultations?

Most patients are already using a form of Telehealth such as via WhatsApp and have bought into it already. They just prefer WhatsApp, as they don't expect to have to pay for the advice. We have found that the most successful doctors are the ones who refuse to use any other communication channel but their chosen solution. They explain this to their patients by getting them to understand that data security is really important and that they need them (the patient) to help to them (the practitioner) remain compliant.

We have also found that if you only offer video calls, it is a lot harder to get patients used to virtual care, as the process of getting both parties together vs a text message, is different. We certainly find that patients who are also given a text option, are far more open and easier to convert to virtual care.

Offering an initial free consultation also works well.

3. I have 2 patients who have moved to The Netherlands and Australia, they still prefer to work with me via Telehealth. Where are we to claim/be paid out from - international Medical Aids?

We are not aware of medical aid schemes paying for cross border patients. As mentioned above, you would certainly need to be registered as a practitioner in the respective country from which you are consulting and consulting to, certainly in Australia.

4. I thought we were not allowed to use WhatsApp, as it is not secure?

WhatsApp is end-to-end encrypted but, this doesn't make it a suitable clinical data solution. It is a social media platform, meant for social media interactions. While it is end-to-end encrypted, it is missing some other vital elements such as a BAA agreement with you on data leakage, and who has access to the data, where it is stored and so on.

There are other logistical issues such as not having a record of consultations, having to give your cell number away and not being able to export the consultation into a Practice Management System.

You're storing the data on your device; you can't take yourself offline or set your response times. You may find it is not suitable if you're ever subject to an audit, where you need to provide data around the time and date of a particular interaction.

I'm pretty sure that you wouldn't be covered by your indemnity cover for a WhatsApp call. With virtual solutions out there, that include texting and that are not only end to end encrypted but, also HIPAA compliant and made for the transfer of clinical data, you have better options than WhatsApp.

5. Would appreciate some input on informed consent forms for patients specifically for telehealth consent please

Patient clinical and financial, as well as telehealth consent forms, are available for EZMed and ProfNet clients. However, please see <https://elsabeklinckassociates.co.za/online-shop-terms/> for a free downloadable telehealth consent form made available by Elsabe Klinck Associates.

6. Do we need to record our virtual sessions?

If you are recording sessions, there are certain permissions required up front. For example, under the CFP Broker's policy, this is a condition: "The Insured shall, prior to doing so, obtain permission to record interviews electronically or to transmit information electronically and shall inform the patient of the risk of breach of privacy or confidentiality inherent in the electronic recording or transmission of information. In addition, the Insured shall, when engaging in electronically transmitted services, ensure that confidentiality and privacy are maintained and shall inform a client of the measures taken to maintain confidentiality."

7. Do we need to record our sessions, as psychologists?

Please check with your association. While the functionality is available, we are not aware of any practitioner who records their sessions. The storing of this data becomes a consideration, and this will require a fair capacity as well as the requirement to be stored in a compliant and secure manner.

8. Have you heard of Signapps used by some organisations to share info re patients in a team?

Yes, it's a well-known programme that facilitates communication between practitioners. It is used in some of the clinics as a way to facilitate communication between treating practitioners. It is compliant and fulfils all the requirements for data security.

It's not made for patient to practitioner communication though. The Medici telehealth app has the same functionality by way of the Group Chat function.

9. I feel like another challenge with regards to Telehealth/Telemedicine is with regards to treatment of elderly patients or less educated patients, since they are often unsure about how to initiate and use the platforms, particularly video platforms. Like you said it's easy using WhatsApp or certain platforms while other sometimes more acceptable or legally covered platforms to the practitioner is not as easy to use for the patient maybe - if it is due to poor signal particularly in more rural areas or due to lack of knowledge in using certain means of technology or whatever the case may be.

It is often a challenge with the elderly folk however, they are also those who benefit the most, due to the fact that some are not always mobile and find it difficult to get to you. For example, there is a doctor who looks after a number of old age homes in the KZN area and he has made videos of himself talking his patients through how to navigate the app (Medici). He sends this to them, and they have managed to work with it pretty well. We have tried very hard to make Medici look like WhatsApp, to make it easy for everyone.

10. Are we allowed to use Zoom, Google Hangouts for telehealth sessions if they are password protected meetings?

Zoom has introduced a Telehealth solution that fulfils the requirements of data security. The business platforms do not have the functionality of the Telehealth offering. In answering the question, you should check with your association and more importantly, your indemnity coverage.

11. Is there specific telehealth criteria available to inform what determines what it is a consultation and what is not? And when to claim?

We have asked this question of practitioners who frequent users and they always say that your experience and ethics should guide you on appropriate billing practices. You need to be able to justify the cost that you have billed - in terms of time and expertise. Not every consultation is appropriate for billing and if in any doubt, rather give it as a free consult. Virtual care is sometimes more about the extension of care as a follow up, or to ensure peace of mind for a new mom, for example, and are often not billed for. Ask yourself the question: Would you be happy to pay for the care you have just given if you were the one receiving it?

12. If Telehealth is to continue, how long do we still have to send the supplementary / SOAP notes for each client and each session. It is an enormous admin task every week, which takes a lot of time. Is anyone ever looking at those?

Additional administrative requirements may be in place depending on the medical scheme. Where this is administrative / in a managed health care approach, this may be appropriate. It is best to check with the individual scheme/administrator.

13. How effective have other SLT's / OT's found telehealth with children?

EZMed: It may be interesting to know that OTASA is actively pursuing acceptance of telehealth interventions through COID. Our COID clients are needing this intervention during their rehab.

14. Can you give us the reference for the article, re the WhatsApp study?

We have posted this on our web, click below to read:

<https://www.ezmed.solutions/media/1076/12929-58037-1-pb.pdf>