



Factsheet

Video consultation etiquette

Video consultation etiquette summary

- Use a fit for purpose room with a plain décor
- Pre-test audio and visual quality and ensure a head shot will be centred on the screen
- Position the microphone to enhance audio quality and minimise background noise
- Adjust the camera gaze angle so that good eye contact can be achieved
- Avoid high intensity light behind the patient being filmed
- Avoid brightly patterned or reflective clothing
- Introduce all parties whether on or off camera
- Ask the patient to provide three approved patient identifiers on camera
- Speak clearly into the microphone and allow others to finish before the next person speaks
- Aim for good eye contact between the patient and distant specialist
- Minimise distracting movements
- Provide privacy if the patient needs to remove clothing for an examination
- Avoid interruptions

Video consultation etiquette is defined by the RACGP as ‘the professional behaviour that supports quality visual and audio performance and patient safety during a video consultation’. The following areas are important components of good video consultation etiquette.

Consultation room

There are some special factors that need to be considered when setting up a room for video consultations. The following features are suggested:

- a quiet room fit for purpose where the raised sound volume routinely associated with telehealth care consultations will not be overheard by others or disturb others
- plain décor that will not distract from visual images on the screen
- a stand, cabinet or trolley for the video camera and monitor
- ready access to medical equipment that may be needed during a video consultation
- ready access to resources for managing adverse events during a video consultation.

Be prepared

To avoid down time during video consultations, it is important to be well prepared. Pre-test the video conference equipment to make sure the audio and visual quality is good and make sure the camera angle is adjusted so that a head shot will be centred on the screen. Have medical records on hand as well as any equipment likely to be needed.

Audio

The microphone should be placed on a firm, flat surface as close as possible to participants to enhance audio quality and minimise background noise.

Participants should speak clearly at a normal voice level and allow others to finish before they start speaking.

Make sure mobile phones are switched off or to silent mode before the consultation.

Minimise background noise such as typing on a computer. It can be useful to use the mute button when people at the other end of the video consultation are speaking.

Visual

It is important to have good lighting so that faces are clearly visible on screen. Avoid high intensity lighting behind the person being filmed.

If the person being filmed needs to move out of the camera frame, this should be explained so that other participants understand what is happening.

The camera gaze angle should be checked in advance and adjusted if necessary to ensure that good eye contact can be achieved – this is important for effective communication between the patient and specialist.

It is recommended that participants not wear brightly patterned or reflective clothing as this may affect the focus of the camera.

Introductions

All parties in the video consultation whether present on or off camera or at a separate location such as a teaching facility, should formally introduce themselves at the commencement of a video consultation. Clinicians should confirm their professional identity, specialty and location.

Patient identification

Where there are clinicians at both ends of a video consultation, it is recommended the support clinician at the patient end assume responsibility for asking the patient to provide three approved patient identifiers such as name, address and date of birth at the commencement of the video consultation to confirm the patient's identity on camera. It is also suggested the support clinician indicate the reason for the consultation to ensure the right doctors are consulting with the right patient for the specified reason, and are using the right patient health record.

Patient privacy and dignity

There should be arrangements to protect the patient's privacy and dignity if they are required to remove clothing for a physical examination, eg. a screen in the consultation room or a separate private area where a patient can remove clothing and be suitably covered with a drape or gown ahead of the video consultation.

Professional courtesy

As a courtesy to patients, it is suggested the practice have protocols to minimise interruptions, eg. 'do not disturb' signage that indicates when a video consultation is in progress.

The video consultation with the patient should be continuous, but where a GP and a distant specialist wish to discuss sensitive issues without the patient being present, this could be done at the beginning or end of the consultation.