



هيئة الصحة
HEALTH AUTHORITY

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1. Purpose

1.1. To define minimum standards for the exchange of views on medical and clinical cases; the soliciting of medical and clinical opinions, advice and guidance from another knowledgeable physician by the use of tele-counseling as an adjunct to the delivery of healthcare services provided by HAAD licensed healthcare providers in the emirate of Abu Dhabi. It aims to ensure the integrity of physician-to-physician counseling conducted via telemedicine interfaces.

2. Scope

2.1. This standard applies to all Healthcare professionals & providers licensed by HAAD in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi that wish to utilise tele-counseling services in support of their healthcare service provision.

2.2. Tele-counseling services may include telephone, video, Internet, remote monitoring and remote imaging consultations.

3. Duties of Healthcare Professionals and Providers

3.1. All HAAD licensed healthcare Professionals and Providers using tele-counseling services must:

3.1.1. comply with the requirements of this Standard when conducting and/or relying on tele-counseling services to support their (or another healthcare provider's) assessment of patient cases including diagnosis, medical and imaging tests, treatment and management;

3.1.2. develop and implement clinical and quality governance systems to assure the integrity and credibility of and accountability for tele-counseling services, and to protect the privacy concerns of the patient and the confidentiality and security of their medical information and records at the site of patient consultation (originating facility, as defined at Section 5), and during transmission to another healthcare professional/provider (distant facility, as defined at Section 5). Confidentiality, privacy and security of health data and

records must comply with the Data Management Policy, Chapter VI, Healthcare Regulator Policy Manual Version 1.0, the HAAD Policy on Medical Records and the HAAD Data Standards requirements;

- 3.1.3. When requesting tele-counseling services, it is the responsibility of the originating HAAD licensed healthcare facility/provider/professional to ensure that such service is only sought from providers licensed by HAAD, where those to be located in Abu Dhabi; or licensed by the respective country specific regulator, where those professionals/providers are located outside of Abu Dhabi. The primary responsibility for clinical and medical healthcare decision resides with (a) where the local Facility is the originating facility, with the originating HAAD licensed healthcare facility and provider/professional, and (b) where the Distant facility is the originating facility, with the Distant facility (provided in each case), the local facility remains responsible to provide appropriate healthcare to the patient;
- 3.1.4. Ensure the facility and professional is licensed by HAAD to provide and/or offer healthcare services to patients in the emirate of Abu Dhabi;
- 3.1.5. comply with the HAAD policies and standards on patient consent, and provide transparent and clear information to patients, where required, about seeking another clinician's counseling services as applicable under the HAAD Policy on Patients' Rights and Responsibilities and the HAAD Patient Rights and Responsibilities Charter;
- 3.1.6. comply with the data submission and reporting requirements specified in the Data Management Policy, Chapter VI, Healthcare Regulator Policy Manual Version 1.0 and set out in the Data Standards (found online at www.haad.ae/datadictionary);
- 3.1.7. have information and communication technology (ICT) policies, procedures and systems in place to assure the safe and effective transmission of health information, ensuring that transmission is maintained confidentially and securely and monitor, assess and assure their effectiveness regularly;
- 3.1.8. ensure that they procure and offer ICT technologies that meet Abu Dhabi Systems & Information Centre (ADSIC) and HAAD technical regulatory requirements and that these technologies afford a high degree of interoperability; and
- 3.1.9. comply with HAAD requests to inspect and audit records and cooperate with HAAD authorised auditors, as required for inspections and audits by HAAD.

4. Enforcement and Sanctions

- 4.1. Healthcare professionals and providers must comply with the terms and requirements of this Standard, the HAAD Standard Contract and the HAAD Data Standards and Procedures. HAAD may impose sanctions in relation to any breach of requirements under this standard in accordance with the Complaints, Investigations, Regulatory Action and Sanctions Policy, Chapter IX, Healthcare Regulator Policy Manual Version 1.0.

5. Standard 1. Definitions

Telemedicine	Telemedicine refers to healthcare services provided via a range of technology enabled communication media other than face-to-face interactions, such as telephone, internet (including email), video and others.
Tele-counseling	Comprises of: a healthcare Telemedicine interaction between two licensed healthcare professionals who have an established collaborative partnership in accordance with Section 11 of this Standard, to seek a second opinion, to assist with diagnosis and/or medical/imaging tests, to provide care instructions, and/or to advise on care/service in support of patient referral for further investigation (such as physician to physician, or physician to nurse, etc.); otherwise also known as Provider to Provider service.
Electronic Medical Record	means a repository of patient data in digital form, stored and exchanged securely, and accessible by multiple authorized users. It contains retrospective, concurrent, and prospective information and its primary purpose is to support continuing, effective and efficient health service and assure quality, safe and integrated healthcare.
Local facility/provider/professional	The HAAD Licensed healthcare facility/provider/professional located in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi from which a request for tele-counseling is raised from or to.
Distant facility/provider/professional	Healthcare facility/provider/professional from which telecounseling services are being sought or provided to, be that facility licensed by HAAD or the country specific regulator, where the healthcare facility/provider/professional providing telecounseling services is located, and that agrees to provide counselling services requested by the originating healthcare facility/provider/professional by means of telecommunication media.

6. Standard 2. Case Mix

- 6.1. Tele-counseling services, as physician-to-physician services, may be used in support of patient cases where:
 - 6.1.1. Capacity or remoteness issues hinder patient access to services (e.g. Lack of clinical service line or specialty area or underserved areas); a requesting healthcare professional must only practise within their HAAD licence, job duties and privileges granted by the employing facility;
 - 6.1.2. the treating specialist has limited skills in the concerned specialty area, but his/her practice remains within their HAAD licence and privileges granted by the employing facility;
 - 6.1.3. complex case that requires input and support from other specialists and/or a multidisciplinary team.

7. Standard 3. Tele-counseling Governance Framework

- 7.1. The Local facility utilises tele-counseling to supplement the needs and improve the quality of its healthcare services in support of the delivery of Abu Dhabi's model of care, including by having in place:
 - 7.1.1. written, and evidence of adherence to, guidelines to describe the purposes of and needs for using tele-counseling services that support the scope of services offered by the facility;
 - 7.1.2. written and evidence of adherence to policies and procedures that govern the use of tele-counseling, including for:
 - 7.1.2.1. staff training on the use of supportive technologies, where identified to be necessary;
 - 7.1.2.2. quality assurance and improvement including for:
 - 7.1.2.2.1. setting and monitoring performance against quality and safety metrics;
 - 7.1.2.2.2. maintaining comprehensive records;
 - 7.1.2.2.3. implementing risk control and management processes for telemedicine services to improve the quality of care and to minimise risk to patients, including the recording, monitoring and reporting of issues and their resolution, auditing of activities and services provided and compliance with HAAD requirements as well as rectification of non-compliance events;
 - 7.1.2.2.4. clearly defined and documented roles and accountabilities of treating physicians and multidisciplinary healthcare team involved in the provision of tele-counseling services and patient management;
 - 7.1.2.2.5. clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for management oversight, operational aspects (medical care and technical IT systems), quality and security of data for telemedicine services in written governance and management protocols;
 - 7.1.2.2.6. where applicable, procedures for safe and effective patient referral and transfer to other providers. The facility policy must be consistent with the requirements of the HAAD Patient Referral and Transfer Standard.
 - 7.1.3. agreements or arrangements as appropriate with other providers to support delivery of patient services and continuity of care (refer Section 11).

8. Standard 4. Service Specifications

- 8.1. Healthcare facilities wishing to utilize tele-counseling services, must:
 - 8.1.1. ensure that tele-counseling is conducted in such a manner that the privacy, access to and confidentiality of case details are assured and cannot be followed (either visually or aurally) by unauthorised and uninvolved staff at the facility;
 - 8.1.2. ensure that the availability of the requisite range of equipment and that equipment choice, maintenance and servicing support quality transmission of information and/or data and/or medical imaging results;
 - 8.1.3. have in place data management systems and protocols that maintain the confidentiality of gathered personal/patient information and that the access to, use, sharing and transmission and reporting of such data complies with the HAAD Policy on Data Management, Chapter VI, Health Regulator Manual, Version 1.0 and the HAAD Data Standards and Procedures;

- 8.1.4. have policies and procedures in place for at least the following elements:
 - 8.1.4.1. collaborations, affiliations, agreements and/or contracts with other healthcare providers in the healthcare system;
 - 8.1.4.2. managing image sharing and transmission;
 - 8.1.4.3. management of patient records including physical and electronic patient records; including recording of video/web/phone consultation;
 - 8.1.4.4. Ensure patient records are eligible and accurate;
 - 8.1.4.5. protocols including network security, confidentiality, privacy and connectivity and protection of confidentiality and privacy of recorded images; and
- 8.1.5. prior to providing Tele-counseling, ensure that it meets the applicable regulatory requirements of the jurisdiction of the Distant facility for providing such services.

9. Standard 5. Staffing and Training

- 9.1. When deciding to utilise tele-counseling, the healthcare provider must ensure that healthcare professionals using tele-counseling satisfy the following requirements:
 - 9.1.1. healthcare professionals are competent in the use of telemedicine technologies in support of patient care;
 - 9.1.2. healthcare professionals are knowledgeable and compliant with the HAAD regulatory requirements, including those governing the use of telemedicine as per this Standard;
 - 9.1.3. The healthcare facility assesses its staff training needs and provides training in telemedicine technologies, where identified as necessary;
 - 9.1.4. The facility maintains an up-to-date record of its staff telemedicine training, whenever conducted.

10. Standard 6. Technical Standards

- 10.1. Healthcare providers must ensure that:
 - 10.1.1. they have the appropriate equipment and devices to support transmission and receipt of all diagnostic and assessment needs of the patients, that the equipment and devices are in good functioning order at the time of tele-counseling, such as when imaging and monitoring data are being exchanged, and that they are appropriately maintained and serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications;
 - 10.1.2. the equipment and devices are compatible with that of the distant site providing tele-counseling services;
 - 10.1.3. that patient test results and health data when used to support tele-counseling services are of high quality, clarity, and legibility including all images;
 - 10.1.4. they have the appropriate systems in place to ensure sufficient availability of the network for critical connectivity; and
 - 10.1.5. they have the appropriate video and examination equipment, where required in support of tele-counseling services.

11. Standard 7. Collaborative Partnerships – Tele-counseling

- 11.1. When establishing collaborative partnerships, a HAAD licensed provider must comply with applicable legal and regulatory requirements in the emirate of Abu Dhabi.
- 11.2. HAAD licensed healthcare providers are expected to have in place written agreements, memoranda of understanding and/or contracts with tele-counseling service providers. Such arrangements are required to:
 - 11.2.1. satisfy compliance, alignment and consistency as applicable to each partners' services with the requirements of this Standard, the scope, nature and application of the tele-counseling services;
 - 11.2.2. assign a designated facility management team/staff responsible for approving and managing contractual/partnership agreements in accordance with good governance practices;
 - 11.2.3. ensure that the HAAD licensed originating facility/provider/professional maintains responsibility for the patient assessment, test findings and diagnosis, care and management, and the continuity of patient care; they are also accountable and liable for medical and clinical care decisions relating to the treated patient;
 - 11.2.4. ensure that where a tele-counseling partner is located outside of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, that their contractual relationship with that partner requires the partner to comply with the relevant country specific regulations and that services are provided to specified performance indicators to assure the safety and quality of care;
 - 11.2.5. ensure that contracts/partnerships are established only with healthcare entities that are able to demonstrate compliance with their country specific regulatory body, including the provision of medical liability insurance;
 - 11.2.6. ensure that all HAAD and Abu Dhabi emirate applicable administrative, clinical and technical requirements are appropriately addressed in partnership arrangements.

12. Standard 8. Payment Mechanism

- 12.1. Cost of services prescribed by this standard for tele-counseling such e.g. Teleradiology, Teledermatology, Teleophthalmology and Telepathology shall be covered for members in accordance with their health insurance plan. The Coding as defined for the provision of in person services applies in addition to the Classification defined in the Coding Manual published by the Clinical Coding Steering Committee.
 - 12.1.1. Distant provider will bill using CPT Evaluation and Management consultation codes if the provider criteria is met; and
 - 12.1.2. Local provider will bill using CPT Evaluation and Management Office Visit Codes.
- 12.2. Reimbursement for telecounseling services shall be in accordance with Standard Provider Contract, HAAD Mandatory Tariff and associated Claims and Adjudication Rules; all documents are available from <http://www.shafafiya.org/dictionary/portal/>;
- 12.3. No separate payment will be made for the cost of telecounseling hardware, equipment and/or transmissions.