

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the use of virtual care by patients and providers. While adapting to practicing differently, BC physicians embraced the use of technology to continue to deliver care to their patients. Recognizing related challenges and issues, the JCCs convened a council of key provincial health care leaders and stakeholders to consider the use of virtual care –now and post-pandemic. In June 2021, the council released the following considerations about the appropriate use of virtual care as guidance for clinical practice and service delivery.



Virtual care is the direct delivery of care between a patient and a provider, or communication between providers regarding the care of a patient, at distance, using information and communication technology. This includes, but is not limited to, video, telephone, text, and email, and may be synchronous (that is, in real time) or asynchronous.



APPROPRIATE USE OF VIRTUAL CARE STATEMENTS

- 1** Appropriate use of virtual care includes access to in-person care and is determined by:
- Contextual consideration of holistic risks for the patient and provider.
 - Continuity of care to offer the full range of comprehensive health system services.
 - Inclusion of patient and family caregiver social determinants of health in decision-making.
 - Patient and family caregiver preferences.
 - Health provider professional judgement.

- 4** Virtual care is most appropriately used when incorporated in to the comprehensive longitudinal, relationship-based primary and specialty care afforded to patients. In the context of episodic care, access to in-person care and pathways to longitudinal care must be supported.



- 7** Appropriate use of virtual care is facilitated by the integration of family physicians and specialist physicians with team-based care in primary care networks, emergency services and specialized community service programs.



- 2** Patient and family caregiver voice, needs, and choice should be sought at each stage of virtual care.

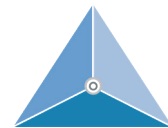
- 5** Appropriate use of virtual care is guided by information on the efficacy, privacy and security and cost-effectiveness of evolving virtual care modalities (synchronous: telephone, video; asynchronous: email, texting).

- 8** Appropriate use of virtual care embeds a continuous quality improvement and continuous learning approach in all aspects of physician clinical practice and service delivery.

- 3** Appropriate use of virtual care requires a culturally safe approach for all patients and family caregivers. This includes consideration of patient needs based on:
- Location –rural and remote vs urban.
 - Access –to a telephone, or to technology and the internet.
 - Literacy and technical literacy.

- 6** Appropriate use of virtual care addresses challenges such as access (i.e., for rural, vulnerable, and marginalized populations) by supporting overall service delivery (virtual and in-person) and decreasing current gaps in service.

- 9** Appropriate use of virtual care supports the Institute of Healthcare Improvement Triple Aim Framework.



Find a list of available JCC virtual care resources for physicians at www.CollaborateOnHealthBC.ca