



## **Virtual Care: Quality of Care Principles**

Despite different care delivery methods, virtual care and in-person care assume very similar management styles regarding quality measures. To manage clinical quality within a virtual care model the same principles should apply.

- Virtual care services must be delivered using a patient centred approach that emphasizes patient engagement, the patient/clinician relationship, and the quality of care.
- Virtual care services must uphold at all times the provision of quality care and be held to the same standards of clinical performance as in-person care, including but not limited to the following processes:
  - o Referral and consultation;
  - o Patient follow-up;
  - o Charting and documentation; and
  - o Laboratory and diagnostic services.
- Virtual care services should be supported whenever possible by the same functional resources as in-person care.
- Virtual care technologies and workflow should be configured to ensure ease of use by both patients and providers.
- Virtual care services should in no way be seen as a replacement for, detract from, or compromise the provision of established core health services.
- Clinical decision-making in virtual care should be anchored in the foundational and ethical principles of medical practice. Appropriate virtual care modalities should be chosen on the basis of clinical circumstances, the likelihood of a quality outcome and informed discourse with the patient.
- Health care services delivered through virtual means should be delivered in the context of an established relationship between a patient and a provider and/or specialty-based team in a manner that:
  - o Promotes continuity of care;
  - o Promotes care closer to home.
- Virtual care technologies and system implementations must be evaluated for their safety, and compliance to standards of quality care.
- Physicians and allied health care workers require a robust liability framework that safeguards their provision of quality virtual care.



- The unique linguistic, cultural and functional needs and requirements of virtual care provision to Indigenous people living in the region require special consideration.
- A virtual care ecosystem should be supported by robust privacy policies designed to protect the privacy and security of all patient health information in a manner that delimits access to a person's information on a need-to-know basis to provide quality care and service based on the will of the information owner.
- Virtual care services need to establish evaluation methods for their telehealth appointments. Outcome indicators should be used to identify successes and opportunities for improvement. Results should be shared with relevant stakeholders. Appropriate categories for evaluation may include:
  - o Access: Number of client seen, number of clients who may not have previously had access to care;
  - o Quality: Outcomes, client and provider satisfaction;
  - o Productivity: Improved productivity amongst clinical staff, multidisciplinary team meetings.