Telehealth Technologies and Preparing to Select a Vendor

Getting Started

Cameras and monitors mounted on mobile carts have been connecting patients in rural exam rooms to distant providers for decades. Many of these integrate electronic stethoscopes and other peripheral devices to transmit a physical exam and other essential vitals. As telehealth programs expand, healthcare organizations have begun to use off-the-shelf webcams/laptops, tablets, and even smart phones. While established vendors compete to create the most efficient end-to-end solution, many new entrepreneurs attempt to navigate the regulatory process. Innovators are developing new software (such as cloud-based videoconferencing, enhanced workflow products, and a wide variety of mobile apps) and hardware (including smaller carts, high-definition cameras, all-in-one peripheral devices, and more). Throughout the industry, a major emphasis to connect the consumer at home or work continues to develop.

Some Common Types of Telehealth Technology

Videoconferencing Software: Facilitates a face-to-face connection using a computer, tablet, or smart phone. These may be used for clinical encounters, administrative meetings, educational webinars, and more.

Peripheral Devices: Stethoscopes, otoscopes, dermascopes, ophthalmoscopes, and other devices that transmit images and data for diagnosis, either viewed in real time or saved and viewed later.

Telemedicine Carts, Field kits, Etc: All-in-one systems that are built by a vendor (or custom fabricated) that contain all essential components for the patient site, such as a computer, peripherals, and more.

Remote Patient Monitoring Kits: Internet connected scales, blood pressure monitors, glucometers, and other devices that transmit vital signs - connect via a mobile kiosk, tablet, or smart phone from home.

Tips for Selecting a Vendor

As the telehealth technology industry continues to grow, it can be difficult to decide which vendor best meets your needs. Review some of these tips to help make an informed choice:

Plan Ahead: Identify how many connections/users you need; Review available bandwidth and existing IT/HIT infrastructure; Evaluate community needs and plan for future expansion.

Research: Thoroughly investigate all vendors online and what products/services they offer; Ask colleagues about their experiences; Ask vendors to connect you with current users.

Demo: Consider attending a conference for hands-on experience with a variety of technology; Insist vendors provide an on-site demo and a pilot period for thorough testing.

HIPAA: Every vendor handling or transmitting PHI should sign a Business Associates Agreement; Remember that technology cannot be HIPAA compliant, **YOU** must use it in a compliant manner.

Long-term: Always review service agreements and any long-term commitments; Assess reoccurring fees and future upgrade costs; Evaluate likelihood a vendor will remain in the market.

Don't Forget: Solicit participation/feedback from all stakeholders; Test interoperability with partners; Evaluate vendor's customer service, training, and troubleshooting resources.

CAUTION: WATCH FOR VENDOR HYPE! Review each product and pitch – carefully analyze terms such as "HIPAA-compliant," "interoperable," and "best on the market". Know your goals and keep technology simple when possible.

Review of the Market

The table below outlines a small sampling of the available vendors based on the common types of telehealth technology. This is not a comprehensive list and is intended to serve as illustrative purposes only. To review additional vendor options, contact your Regional Telehealth Resource Center or the National Telehealth Technology Assessment Resource Center.

Videoconferencing Software	Peripheral Devices	Mobile Carts, Field Kits, etc.	Remote Patient Monitoring Kits
Cisco	AMD Global Telemedicine (exam camera and others)	AMD Global Telemedicine (carts, wall-mount system, field kit)	AMC Health
CNOW	Eko (stethoscope)	American Well (Kiosk and carts)	Carematix
Doxy.me	Firefly (Otoscope and other cameras)	Avizia (carts)	Honeywell
Go to Meeting	Global Med (exam camera and others)	Double Robotics (remote presence robotics)	Ideal Life
Polycom	Jedmed (Camera system w/ multiple attachments)	Ergotron (carts)	Medtronic
Skype for Business	MedWand– seeking FDA approval (Camera system w/ multiple attachments)	Global Med (carts, wall-mount system, field kit)	Philips
swyMed	Littmann (stethoscope)	Intouch Health (mobile camera system & remote presence)	
Vidyo	RNK Products (stethoscope)	Rubbermaid (carts)	
VSee	Thinklabs (stethoscope)	VGo (remote presence robotics)	
WeCounsel	tytocare – seeking FDA approval (Camera system w/ multiple attachments)	VSee (carts and field kits)	
Zoom		Yorktel (wall-mount system & field kit)	

For more information about telehealth, visit www.telehealthresourcecenter.org

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