

Topic 4: Fostering a Digital Therapeutic Relationship Through Engagement & Feedback

Before the Clinical Encounter	During the Clinical Encounter	After the Clinical Encounter
Arrange favorable lighting behind the computer, such as a ring light or natural lighting, reducing shadows on their face.*	Ensure that all movement is intentional, including looking up or down as the patient speaks.*	<i>Collect</i> data about user experience and engagement with digital tools. (Dig Readiness, Tech Evaluation)
Dress professionally and position the computer camera to capture the full-face mid-screen.*	Be mindful of how often and for how long eye contact is broken to look at technology during a clinical encounter (e.g., an electronic record, computer, phone, second monitor, etc.)	<i>Create</i> treatment plans in partnership with patients that enable patients to have choice based on their preferences and comfort level with digital tools (Patient Engagement, Shared-Decision Making)
Limit distracting clutter behind the speaker, visible to the viewer.*	“Narrate” behavior to minimize misinterpretation: request permission to take notes, punctuate quiet listening with verbal encouragements.*	<i>Identify</i> elements that detract from care in a digital format, and devise solutions for improving experiences for patients and providers. (Dig Readiness, Tech Evaluation)
Asking your patients what their preferred form of communication is? (e.g., text-message, phone, video, in-person, email)	Add simple statements such as “Let me think just a moment” to give the patient confidence your continued focus.*	<i>Assess</i> the follow-up communication plan and whether patients felt like they could ask their provider questions to understand their results and any required actions or follow up.
<i>Develop</i> risk assessment plans and strategies available so that everyone knows what to do if a crisis should arise (e.g., patient crisis)	A patient's distress may be more difficult to interpret on video; ask direct questions to understand the patient's emotional state.*	<i>Engage</i> in a discussion and solicit feedback from patients on digital documentation (e.g., language to be revised or improved for future appointments)

<p><i>Devise</i> strategies to manage potential conflict with your patient(s) for when technology fails</p>	<p>Use plain language (limited medical jargon or explain medical terminology)</p>	<p><i>Recognize</i> the ethical implications and impact of the social determinants of health (e.g., education, culture, housing, internet accessibility) on preferences related to using digital health technologies in a respectful, nonjudgmental manner. (Patient Engagement, Patient Experience)</p>
<p><i>Understand</i> the privacy implications, potential risks, and how communications and/or data will be secured.</p>	<p>Demonstrating reliability and honesty by using humility and sharing personal experiences and difficulties using the technology? (e.g., sharing a challenge you had logging on to Zoom)</p>	<p><i>Identify</i> education opportunities for all stakeholders (patients, families, healthcare providers) to improve digital literacy and digital communication methods. (Dig Readiness, Tech Implementation)</p>

*derived from Newcomb et al. 2021

References

1. Newcomb AB, Duval M, Bachman SL, Mohess D, Dort J, Kapadia MR. Building Rapport and Earning the Surgical Patient's Trust in the Era of Social Distancing: Teaching Patient-Centered Communication During Video Conference Encounters to Medical Students. J Surg Educ. 2021 Jan-Feb;78(1):336-341. doi: 10.1016/j.jsurg.2020.06.018. Epub 2020 Jul 21.