Virtual Care Tips

1. Stay calm, enjoy. You can do this. This is different than what you are used to and can work really well!
2. Be prepared that things may not go as expected. Anticipate that technology may fail, so have a backup:
   * Have a backup virtual platform ready to go if one platform fails. Zoom, doxy.me, Facetime and other platforms are available.
   * Use a phone if necessary, meetings don’t have to have video. MSP will pay the 13037 billing code for telephone or video telehealth encounters.
   * Some areas of the province may not have the necessary bandwidth to support audio and video in the virtual platform. If you are getting a broken up signal, try turning off the video at one, then both ends of the conversation. If the audio still is broken up, go to the phone to do a direct call.
   * If the video or audio suddenly drops when it had been working before, use the chat feature to ask them to leave the meeting and then re-join, or if this still doesn’t work, reboot their computer and re-join
   * Use your smartphone’s hotspot feature if the internet isn’t working. You can run some EMRs all day on a hotspot connection without using much data!
   * Wireless connections can work well but if the session video or audio breaks up, go to a hardwire connection where possible, the bandwidth is usually better than wireless.
3. Virtual encounters work, they are not necessarily second-best to face-to-face encounters, and, where appropriate, can be better. This will be different than what you are used to, but not necessarily worse. Do as best you can and make it a learning experience for both you and the patient.
4. A virtual meeting room can be whatever you like. When you are using Zoom (or a similar platform), you can have a background added (like you see on weather reports on TV), and everyone connects to the same Zoom link or can use a phone or computer to connect to audio only.
5. Virtual visits can take longer than face-to-face visits
   * Technology can be a problem to establish a good connection
     1. This is especially a problem if audio doesn’t work. Try using Zoom for video computer to computer and phoning the patient directly phone to phone
   * Many people (especially elderly) may have trouble finding the access link in the invitation email or find the technology difficult
     1. Try and arrange a more tech-savvy support person to be in the room with the person you suspect may have trouble connecting
     2. Be prepared to walk through the problem the patient is having connecting to the platform
     3. Don’t spend too long trying to fix a connection problem. Go to the phone if there are difficulties.
   * Test out the technology, such as the Zoom platform, with friends and family first, to become more comfortable with the technology and to identify areas where there may be challenges. Practice using it!
   * Have an agenda set up for the virtual encounter, EMR templates that help guide a conversation, provide access through links to patient and/or provider resources or clinical decision tools are very helpful.
6. Optimize the video/visual environment
   * Two monitors are better than one
     1. If running off the same computer, you can get dual video output cards
     2. If only one monitor can run off the computer, use a laptop as the second screen
        1. Laptops can be useful because they usually have built-in video cameras, speakers and microphones – although the sound or picture quality can be lower.
        2. You can get multi-port adapters for laptops that allow you to plug in another screen to the laptop. Many laptops have this connection ability built in.
   * Remember, not everyone has a video camera or knows how to turn it on if they do have it.
7. Optimize the audio experience
   * An over the ear headset can look funny, consider ear inserts/plugs
     1. Boese Quietcomfort or SoundSport wired earplugs work really well, stay in the ear and have good sound quality
     2. Jabra 45 single ear wireless earplug is comfortable and good sound quality
     3. Jabra 65T stereo wireless earplugs have good noise cancelling, wind sound supressing qualities but may not fit as well as the above two headsets.
   * For a desktop microphone/speaker, the Jabra 510 is excellent. It really works well for conferences with more than one person in the room.
   * If there’s more than one person on the virtual meeting/encounter and there’s lots of background noise, ask anyone not speaking to go on mute.
     1. Sometimes tough to remember to go on or off mute during a conversation!
8. Consider using a Chromium platform browser: Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge or Brave.
   * Brave may have the best privacy settings and may be faster than either of the others in certain situations
   * It’s likely that Health Authority computers will only have Chrome installed