DOS AND DON'TS OF THE NEW VIRTUAL WORLD

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, telemedicine was plodding along, considered important but practiced sporadically. Now, telemedicine has ramped up both in utilization and necessity in ways no one could have anticipated. As hospitals and clinicians seek to effectively leverage technology and transition into a more digital mode of care, they must be aware of not only the exciting opportunities, but also the potential challenges. In this tip sheet, you'll find a few key dos and don'ts for each phase of the telehealth process.

EXPLORATION

DO:

☑ Define your facility or system-wide virtual health strategy by thinking strategically about your goals, patient populations, current capabilities, potential partnerships, and success metrics.

DON'T:

☒ Rush the process of selecting vendors—especially for telehealth solutions. It is vital to have a reliable, experienced, and patient-oriented partner.

☒ Keep the decision-making circle too small. Failing to include diverse voices in decisions about new or additional telehealth solutions will result in inadequate and unequal service, communication, and care for the various unique groups in your community.

IMPLEMENTATION

DO:

☑ Ensure you understand the proper provider licensure requirements for your state during ordinary and crisis times.

☑ Implement a robust training plan for virtual clinicians to include communication, virtual evaluation and diagnosis, technical troubleshooting, and more.

DON'T:

☒ Overlook privacy and security standards and requirements. Since the patient and provider are not in the same room, there is an even more important obligation to make sure patients (including their information) are safe—and feel safe too.

☒ Assume that your local community understands telehealth and is equipped to use it. Even patients who are savvy in the technology piece might not know when to choose virtual visits over urgent care or the emergency room —and it's your duty to educate them.

EVALUATION

DO:

☑ Continually evaluate how telemedicine fits into your financial expectations and objectives. Cost and reimbursement in the virtual world can look very different and change frequently— so make sure you're considering these factors in your decisions and plans.

☑ Keep an eye out for other technological innovations that can support your telehealth programs, including chatbots and AI tools that can streamline intake processes and increase provider efficiency.

DON'T:

☒ Forget to measure success and adapt. Especially with how quickly technology is updated and consumer trends change, it's important to continuously capture and analyze key metrics (utilization, satisfaction, outcomes, etc). While you can't please everyone, making data-driven decisions can help you stay relevant and meaningful in your community.