

HPCSA GUIDELINES

SUMMARY ON TELEHEALTH

The extracts below are a summary of the HPCSA Telehealth Guidelines that can be found through the links in the footnotes.

GUIDELINES ON TELEMEDICINE 9 MARCH 2020

- ✔ Healthcare practitioners' conduct should be ethical and professional at all times, even when dealing with patients remotely.
- ✔ Both the consulting and servicing healthcare practitioners must be registered either with the HPCSA if the practice is in South Africa or an equivalent regulatory body in the country where the servicing healthcare practitioner is based (if outside South Africa).
- ✔ Formal (preferably written) consent for among other things, specific services, including diagnosis and prescriptions and Information Communication Technology equipment to be used must always be secured from the patient.
- ✔ Confidentiality for the patient and all information generated during procedures must always be respected.
- ✔ The consulting practitioner remains responsible for the treatment, decisions and other recommendations given to the patient.
- ✔ All records generated during the service about the patient and participating healthcare practitioners must be stored, using routine procedures and systems.

AMENDMENTS FOR COVID-19 26 MARCH

- ✔ "Telemedicine" is hereby replaced with "Telehealth" which includes amongst others, Telemedicine, Telepsychology, Telepsychiatry, Telerehabilitation, etc., and involves remote consultation with patients using telephonic or virtual platforms of consultation.
- ✔ Telehealth is only permissible in circumstances where there is an already established practitioner-patient relationship, except where Telepsychology and/or Telepsychiatry is involved, in which case telehealth is permissible even without an established practitioner-patient relationship.
- ✔ Practitioners may charge a fee for services rendered through a telehealth platform.
- ✔ Where practitioners are in doubt whether a telehealth consultation will be in the best interest of the patient, they are encouraged to advise patients to present themselves for a face-to-face consultation to seek assistance at a health care facility closest to them.

¹ https://www.hpcsa.co.za/Uploads/Press%20Realeses/2020/Guidelines_to_telemedicine_in_South_Africa.pdf

² https://www.hpcsa.co.za/Uploads/Events/Announcements/APPLICATION_OF_TELEMEDICINE_GUIDELINES.pdf

³ https://www.hpcsa.co.za/Uploads/Professional_Practice/Conduct%20%26%20Ethics/Booklet%2010%20Tele-medicine%20September%20%202016.pdf

**FURTHER COVID-19 AMMENDMENTS
THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA (HPCSA) RESPONSE
TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC
7 April 2020**

✓ Telemedicine/Telehealth – On 26 March 2020, the HPCSA published the Guidance on the Application of Telemedicine Guidelines During the Covid-19 Pandemic. The following provisions in these guidelines were hereby amended¹:

1. Clause (b) which stated that:

“Telehealth is only permissible in circumstances where there is an already established practitioner patient relationship, except where Telepsychology and/or Telepsychology is involved, in which case telehealth is permissible even without an established practitioner-patient relationship”.

It is hereby amended as follows:

Telehealth should preferably be practiced in circumstances where there is an already established practitioner-patient relationship, and where such a relationship does not exist, practitioners may still consult using Telehealth provided such consultations are done in the best interest of patients.

2. Clause (c) which stated that:

“Practitioners may charge a fee for services rendered through a telehealth platform.”

It is hereby amended as follows:

Although practitioners may charge fees for consultations undertaken through Telehealth platforms, the Council strongly cautions against practices that may amount to over-servicing and perverse incentives. Practitioners are reminded that the Ethical Rules of Conduct for Health Practitioners Registered under the Health Professions Act are still applicable during the practice of Telehealth; that these guidelines are only applicable during the COVID-19 pandemic and that the HPCSA shall, soon after the end of the pandemic, inform practitioners at to when the guidelines will cease to apply.

¹ https://www.hpcsa.co.za/Uploads/PSB_2019/Announcements/HPCSA_RESPONSE_TO_THE_COVID-19_PAN-DEMIC_7_April_2020_Final.pdf