

## New AMA Telemedicine and Telehealth Guidelines



New ethical guidance adopted today at the American Medical Association's (AMA) Annual Meeting will help physicians understand how their fundamental responsibilities may play out differently when patient interactions occur through telemedicine, compared to traditional patient interactions at a medical office or hospital.

The new ethical guidance on telehealth and telemedicine was developed over the past three years by the AMA's Council on Ethics and Judicial Affairs, and adopted by a vote of physicians from every corner of the country. The development of the new guidelines coincides with innovations in technology that are changing the ways in which people live their lives, including reshaping the ways they engage with medicine.

"Telehealth and telemedicine are another stage in the ongoing evolution of new models for the delivery of care and patient-physician interactions," said AMA Board Member Jack Resneck, M.D. "The new AMA ethical guidance notes that while new technologies and new models of care will continue to emerge, physicians' fundamental ethical responsibilities do not change."

See Also: [Telemedicine Trial for Diabetes](#)

In any model for care, patients need to be able to trust that physicians will place patient welfare above other interests, provide competent care, provide the information patients need to make well-considered decisions about care, respect patient privacy and confidentiality, and take steps needed to ensure continuity of care.

The evolution of telehealth and telemedicine capabilities offers increasingly sophisticated ways to conduct patient evaluations as technologies for obtaining patient information remotely continue to evolve and improve. The AMA guidelines permit physicians utilizing telehealth and telemedicine technology to exercise discretion in conducting a diagnostic evaluation and prescribing therapy, within certain safeguards.

"Physicians who provide clinical services through telemedicine must recognise the limitation of the relevant technologies and take appropriate steps to overcome those limitations," said Dr. Resneck. "What matters is that physicians have access to the relevant information they need to make well-grounded recommendations for each patient."

The AMA guidelines also recognise that a coordinated effort across the profession is necessary to achieve the promise and avoid the pitfalls of telemedicine. Active engagement should support ongoing refinement of telemedicine technologies and relevant standards, while also promoting initiatives that will help make needed technology more readily available to all patients who want to use telemedicine services.

Source: [American Medical Association](#)

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Published on : Fri, 17 Jun 2016