


# Chapter 2

## Understanding Telehealth From an Administrator's Perspective

**Shashi Bhushan Gogia**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2682-1520>

*Society for Administration of Telemedicine and Healthcare Informatics, India*

### **ABSTRACT**

*In most places and somewhat compounded in developing countries, huge gaps exist in health facilities between rural and urban areas. The cost of travel to a suitable facility with the need to take time off work for self and relatives are burdens, which have become solvable through technology. Telehealth cuts down health-related travel and can improve the organization brand and market reach. It also helps increase the total number of patients even while shortening turnaround time with better patient retention through all around comprehensive care. However, the incorporation of telehealth needs to be planned with careful micro-management and closely aligned to the overall vision and growth strategy of the organization. Knowledge of scope as well as pitfalls is important. Many such efforts have resulted in disappointing outcomes. Experience is being gained along with better understanding of the limitations.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The value and need for remote care rose during COVID but usage fell with the need for social distancing. However, the demand by patients for remote care which was simmering even before COVID, rose further. From the hospital administrator's perspective, remote care means less direct income for the hospital but is something to be deeply considered looking at the demand. It helps brand building and widens

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-8552-4.ch002

the reach of the hospital. This article looks at the overall value proposition of telehealth and a need-based implementation.

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of telehealth and the essential tools required for its successful implementation. It will delve into what telehealth encompasses, including various services such as video consultations and remote monitoring, and the technical infrastructure needed to support these services effectively. Some of the key benefits and major pitfalls of incorporating telehealth into a healthcare organization will also be discussed. The chapter will address the common obstacles faced when implementing telehealth solutions and provide strategies to overcome them. Few practical tips and case studies illustrating successful implementation approaches will help in providing guidance for hospitals adopting telehealth as a service. Finally, the chapter will explore the future landscape of telehealth and its potential evolution.

Understanding the nuances of telehealth, recognizing its benefits and challenges, effectively managing implementation, and staying informed about future trends will enable administrators to make informed decisions and leverage telehealth to enhance patient care and operational efficiency. As the healthcare industry continues to evolve, embracing telehealth can not only meet the growing demand for remote care but also position healthcare organizations at the forefront of innovation and patient-centered care. This chapter serves as a roadmap for administrators to navigate the complexities of telehealth and harness its potential for the benefit of their institutions and the communities they serve.

## WHAT IS TELEHEALTH?

### Travel for Health Is a Health Cost

All humans are equal and deserve equal access to health support. Travel to a health facility and back, though rarely considered, is a major impediment for those located in remote locations.

Telehealth (*Tele* = Distance + *Health*) literally means “healing from a distance”. It is provision of healthcare to people and communities who have constrained access to support because of immobility, distance or time. It cuts down health related travel.

Telehealth involves usage of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the form of telephones, smartphones, and mobile wireless devices, with or without a video connection as an enabler to expand the reach and provision of healthcare across physical boundaries (Dorsey & Topol, 2016). It relates to *transmitting* information (voice, data, images) *rather than moving* (care receivers or providers). Telehealth encompasses **health provision**, as well as **education**. There are immense

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