

A SHORT PRIMER FOR PATIENTS AND  
CAREGIVERS ON

# TELEMEDICINE PRACTICE GUIDELINES

(issued on 25 March 2020)



These are the times of COVID 2019 and social distancing.

This primer will help explain the methods to get consultations, prescriptions and other **health related services through communication and information technologies** such as emails, phone calls etc.



# WHAT IS TELEMEDICINE?

- Telemedicine includes health-related services such as consultations, providing prescriptions, health information services and self-care within jurisdiction of India.
- Telemedicine includes all channels of communication including Voice, Audio, Text & Digital Data exchange (such as emails). It can be done through Skype, Whatsapp, Facebook messenger, mobile apps, fax etc.



Telemedicine should be avoided for emergency consult and the patient should be advised to visit a Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP) in person as soon as possible.



# PRESCRIPTION OF MEDICINE

Here is the list of medicines that could be prescribed along with the mode and nature of consultation.

LIST	MODE OF CONSULTATION	NATURE OF CONSULTATION	TYPE OF MEDICINES FALLING UNDER THIS LIST
O	Any	Any	<i>'Over-the-counter' medications such as Paracetamol, ORS, Antacids etc. Also, some emergency medicines</i>
A	Video	First Consultation  Follow-up, only for continuation of medications*	<i>Prescribed medications for which diagnosis is possible only by video consultation such as anti-fungal medications for Tinea Cruris, Ciprofloxacin eye drops for Conjunctivitis etc. and  Re-fill medications for chronic diseases such as Diabetes, Hypertension, Asthma/</i>
B	Any	Only through follow up	<i>'Add-on' medications which are used to optimize an existing condition. For instance, if the patient is already on Atenolol for hypertension and the blood pressure is not controlled, an ACE inhibitor such as Enalapril</i>

*\*If there is a gap of more than 6 months from previous consultation, it will be treated as first consultation.*

A follow-up consultation is possible if it is within 6 months of the previous consultation. Otherwise, it is treated as first consult under the guidelines.



- Prescription is only allowed after proper diagnosis/provisional diagnosis.
- **How an e-prescription should be made:** RMP shall provide photo, scan, digital copy of a signed prescription or e-Prescription to the patient via email or any messaging platform. A sample format has been given in the guidelines. If sending directly to pharmacy, it should be with approval of the patient.



**Medicines that cannot be prescribed via telemedicine:** Medicines listed in Schedule X of Drug and Cosmetic Act and Rules or any Narcotic and Psychotropic substance listed in the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act 1985 cannot be prescribed via telemedicine. For instance, Anti-Cancer drugs; Narcotics such as Morphine, Codeine etc.



# GENERAL RULES

- Telemedicine will be governed by same ethical and professional norms as in-patient consultation including maintaining privacy and confidentiality.
- **Who can practice telemedicine?** Only a Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP) can provide health related services through telemedicine.
- **Technology platforms** (website, mobile apps etc) providing telemedicine services to consumers **shall be obligated to ensure that the consumers are consulting with duly registered RMPs.** They shall do their due diligence, provide mechanism for queries or grievances and provide details including qualification and registration number of every RMP listed on the platform.



# GENERAL RULES

Telemedicine consultation **cannot be anonymous**. Both RMP and the patient should know each other's identities.

- RMP will confirm your name, age, address, email ID, phone number, registered ID or any other identification as may be deemed to be appropriate.
- If there is any doubt, RMP **may ask for age proof**.
- There should be a mechanism for you to verify the credentials and contact details of the RMP.
- RMP will begin the consultation with his **name and credentials**. RMP shall display his **registration number** on prescriptions, receipts, e-communications, website etc.



# GENERAL RULES

- **Consent:** Patient consent is necessary. It is implied if telemedicine is initiated by the patient. If caregiver, health worker or RMP initiates then explicit consent recorded in any form (email, text, audio/video message etc.) is needed.
- **Costs:** RMP shall provide a receipt for the fees charged.
- **Medical Records:** RMP is required to maintain all records of the patients.





# RULES FOR MINORS

**An adult must be present:** Where the patient is a minor, tele-consultation would be allowed only if the minor is consulting along-with an adult. Adult's identity needs to be ascertained. Minor is anyone who is 16 years or lesser.

# RULES FOR CAREGIVERS

Caregiver is a family member or any other person authorized by the patient to represent the patient.

Consult between caregiver and RMP is possible without the patient being present in two cases:

- a. When the patient is a minor or incapacitated.
- b. Caregiver has a formal authorization or verified document and/or has been verified by patient in a previous in-person consult. The patient should have given explicit consent in that case.



## DISCLAIMER

Please note that this document is just for ease of reference and does not provide any medical or legal advice.

For more details please refer to the official guidelines by clicking on the link below

<https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/Telemedicine.pdf>

For any suggestions or changes, please write to [swatiagrawal1@gmail.com](mailto:swatiagrawal1@gmail.com)

