

## Methods Used in Teledentistry and their Benefits

Mark Wilson\*

Department of Oral Medicine and Parodontology, University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine, Aurora, USA

### DESCRIPTION

Combining telecommunications and dentistry, teledentistry entails the transmission of clinical data and images over vast distances for dental consultation and treatment planning. Teledentistry is defined as "the practise of using video-conferencing technologies to diagnose and provide advice about treatment over distance," and was coined by Cook.

By sending each dentist a copy of the patient's clinical and radiological images, teledentistry for specialist consultations aids in diagnosis, planning, and coordination of dental treatments. Using actual images of dental issues rather than tooth charts and written descriptions helps in obtaining second opinions, preauthorization, and other insurance requirements instantly. Teledentistry complements conventional teaching strategies in dental education and offers new opportunities for dental professionals as well as students.

### Methods used in teledentistry

**Live video (synchronised):** Real-time, two-way video communication between a patient and a healthcare professional. Live video is frequently used for specialty consultations or to assign patients to the best level of care. For this kind of teledentistry, the American Dental Association has assigned the code D9995.

**Store-and-forward (Asynchronous):** The transmission of recorded health information (such as radiographs or digital impressions taken by a properly licenced provider) to a practitioner through a secure electronic communications system, who then uses the information to assess or diagnose the patient's condition at a later time. For this kind of teledentistry, the American Dental Association has assigned the code D9996.

**Remote patient monitoring:** It is the process of gathering health information from a patient in one location (typically outside of a traditional clinical setting) and transmitting it to a provider in another location for use in care and related support.

**Mobile health:** It refers to health promotion and education using portable electronics like tablets or cell phones.

### Assistance from the dental profession

Using radiographs and other information like the patient's clinical findings, photographs, test results, and case history, dentists can also communicate with one another using the remote monitoring method. In this type of teleconsultation, the patient is not physically present. This has drawbacks like message misunderstandings, privacy concerns, and inadequate professional training.

### Benefits

A simpler, more affordable, and less intimidating way to access dentistry is through teledentistry. Teledentistry can also help general dentists with specialised tasks and enhance services for underserved populations, such as those in rural or less developed areas.

### Dental insurance policies' value-added benefit of teledentistry:

To acknowledge that teledentistry exists as a subset of telehealth and that these codes are acknowledged by the industry, the dental insurance sector adopted ADA codes like D9995 and D9996. The majority of dental insurance companies, however, had not designated these codes as payable to dentists in the event that they were actually billed when a patient received teledentistry services. The resolution also states that dental insurers, both public and private, should cover services provided through teledentistry at the same level as if the services were provided in a traditional in-person encounter, with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in November 2020. Dental insurance providers strongly embraced this advice from the American Dental Association and then took it a step further by adding value-added benefits to their dental insurance policies to support teledentistry.

**Correspondence to:** Mark Wilson, Department of Oral Medicine and Parodontology, University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine, Aurora, USA, E-mail: mark@wilson.edu

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