

Barriers Faced in Receiving Telehealth Care

What is a barrier?

A barrier to telehealth is any object, circumstance or situation that interferes, hinders or prevents someone from gaining access to and receiving the appropriate level of care through telehealth technologies.

Barriers

Broadband expansion can be expensive. This can limit the number of rural areas and smaller communities that have connectivity. This also can put broadband access out of the range of affordability for patients.

Even if a patient has the desire to use telehealth services, they may not have the technology needed. And if they do own or have access to the appropriate technology, they may not have the knowledge to use it effectively.

Regulations in the way telemedicine is billed and the limitations insurance has on covering telemedicine can hinder the amount of telehealth options that are available to patients. This can add financial pressure on patients preventing them from getting care.

Solutions

For patients with financial constraints on internet expenses, they can sign up for Lifeline, a program that can reimburse eligible consumers on part of their Wi-Fi bill.

Wi-Fi can also be found and used at local libraries, schools, and community centers.

There are occasional grants available that provide funding to purchase Telehealth equipment, and sometimes state Medicaid agencies will assist in sponsorship of initial costs of telehealth equipment.

To assist in technological literacy, telehealth resource centers have training and demo centers, as well as demo videos to learn how to utilize equipment.

Current and pending legislative activities are lobbying for increased utilization of telehealth and decreased barriers in regards to reimbursement.

For telehealth information, there are telehealth resource centers to utilize across the country. Overall, there are 12 regional TRCs and 2 national TRCs. To find the appropriate TRC, <https://www.cchpca.org/telehealth-resource-centers/>

Broadband Access and Affordability

Technology Access and Literacy

Reimbursement

Overcoming these barriers is essential to increasing access to care and helping to improve patient health literacy. It is shown that video communication has much higher patient understanding and satisfaction than communication with providers on the phone.