

BETTER RESPONSE CAPABILITIES

REDUCTION IN COSTS OF HEALTHCARE

Tele-Audiology

DECREASE IN WAIT TIMES

REDUCTION IN MEDICAL TRAVEL

MORE COMFORTABLE



Should Your Practice Offer Tele-Audiology Services?

by Adam Dawson

In 2018 there isn't much you can't do remotely. Work, school, shopping, socializing... we've reached a point where we can do almost anything we want from the comfort of our homes. It only makes sense that healthcare would follow. And it has.

Telemedicine has existed in the U.S. for decades. Even tele-audiology is older than you probably realize. Dr. Greg Givens first coined the term in 1999, and it was just one year later when he performed the first remote audiology test over the internet.

What Is Tele-Audiology?

According to the American Academy of Audiology, tele-audiology is, "the delivery of audiology services and information via telecommunications technologies."

There are two main types of tele-audiology methodologies: Synchronous/real-time testing and store-and-forward testing. Synchronous/real-time testing is, as the name implies, conducted in real time with a real audiologist.

Store-and-forward testing, on the other hand, is conducted by a nurse or technician who then transfers the results of the test to an audiologist who later interprets them.

The Veterans Administration has been using tele-audiology extensively since 2009, and recently the Department of Defense has instituted a tele-audiology program of their own. And there are some states, like Alaska, that otherwise couldn't provide medical services if it weren't for tele-audiology.

The Alaska Federal Healthcare Access Network (AFHCAN) was established in 1998 and provides services to more than 180 community clinics around the state. They provide an array of services, from video otoscopy and audiometry to hearing aid clearance and follow-up visits after surgery. And they reach a segment of the population that wouldn't have any care if it weren't for tele-care.

However, increased access to healthcare is just one of many benefits of tele-audiology. Other notable ones include:

- Decrease in wait times
- Reduction in medical travel
- Better rapid response capabilities
- More comfortable for some patients
- Reduction in costs of healthcare

Who Is Tele-Audiology For?

Tele-medicine, in general, was established to service the most remote patients in the most rural communities by connecting them with healthcare professionals. People who live in Alaska, Wyoming, the Dakotas, Montana, or Minnesota, where not only are many communities remote, but also where winter travel can be extremely dangerous, are ideal candidates for tele-audiology services.

However, there is also a segment of the urban population that has benefited from tele-audiology services. While low-income families in urban communities may only be a few miles away from services, they still feel as though that access doesn't really exist. Tele-audiology is a way for those patients to get the help they need at a cost they can afford.

Ten Steps to Implementing a Tele-Audiology Program

Establishing a tele-audiology program is a project that shouldn't be taken lightly. If you're considering implementing one in your practice, these are some steps that you'll need to take:

1. Assess where your practice is now, and everything you'll have to do to add tele-audiology services to your clinic.
2. Determine the need for tele-audiology services in your area by conducting market research, and then create a business plan for meeting that need.
3. Purchase all necessary equipment. The Interacoustics Remote Audiology System (RAS) is an all-encompassing package that will allow you to provide tele-audiology services in no time. For more information on this revolutionary product, get in touch with us today!
4. Hire and train your staff on all equipment and procedures.
5. Create a user-friendly, comfortable environment that simulates a face-to-face setting.
6. Create a plan to seamlessly integrate tele-audiology into your other services.
7. Create a solid IT support plan, as technology is the foundation for a successful tele-audiology program. If problems occur, you'll need to know how to proceed.
8. Create a list of procedures, policies, and performance goals.
9. Create a plan for evaluating and improving your tele-audiology service.
10. Know all the legal issues that pertain to tele-medicine, and make sure your clinic is covered.

Ten years ago, did you think we'd be doing this much on a virtual platform? Could any of us have

predicted the ways in which technology has changed our lives, and will no doubt continue to? The important thing to remember is that the trend has been set. Having remote access to just about anything is here to stay. And that includes tele-medicine, and specifically tele-audiology.

Implementing a tele-audiology service into your practice may seem daunting, but in the end, it can help you reduce overhead accelerate growth. If you're considering adopting tele-audiology into your organization, get in touch

with your local e3 office today. We'd love to learn your needs and determine how our solutions can help meet them.

About the Author

Adam is the Digital Marketing Coordinator at e3 Diagnostics. His interest in hearing healthcare is driven by his passion for music because he feels everyone should be able to clearly listen to Pet Sounds at least once in their life. In his free time, he enjoys playing video games, digging through record stores for classic vinyl, shooting hoops, and writing stories.