
Virtual Group Consultations

Managing Risk

Please see outlined below some guidance to support you:

Before you deliver Virtual Group Consultations (VGC's)

- 1. Identify and assess any potential risks by:**
 - a. Undertaking a data protection impact assessment
 - b. Understanding Risk Management Standards
 - c. Keeping a Risk/Hazard log
- 2. Make sure you are covered by:**
 - a. Speaking to your MDO and Letting them know you are delivering VGC's and the details of consent and confidentiality process you have in place
 - b. Check your cover and if needed consider any additional optional CYBER RISK INSURANCE, this can include cover for data loss and third-party breach

In your Virtual Group Consultations Session

Check patient's identification and ensure they have agreed to participate and give consent to proceed and share relevant information. Anyone in the session with them (e.g. family member or carer) must also give consent). If anyone refuses to give consent, they should not be allowed to continue with live VGC session and any information about them should be removed from the session discussion/ results board prior to start of the session. The facilitator should also cover confidentiality again at the start of the session and ensure that participants understand what this means (using the etiquette/group principles TEMPLATE). You may also want to confirm patient's location prior to the VGC to ensure you are able to contact them after the VGC if needed.

After your Virtual Group Consultations

Document the session updating patients records as you would with any other patient consultation, ensuring that you also document your consent and confidentiality process i.e. 4 stage confidentiality process, as below:

1. Confidentiality form sent with invite (adapting templates provided for your practice)
2. Confidentiality and Identification process at pre session VGC check in
3. Confidentiality again reinforced at start of each VGC session
4. Confidentiality process documented in patients notes

Managing risk in your practice

As with any risk assessment process we would advise that if you have any further queries that you check with your own indemnity provider.

Data Protection

Virtual Group Consultations involve sharing and discussion which can include personal information about your patients. You are required by law to keep this information safe under the Data Protection Act. You can complete your own Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to identify and reduce risks. If you feel that there is a high risk of sensitive information being shared and used inappropriately you may want to purchase additional data protection insurance. This insurance is called 'cyber security insurance' and can cover fraud, data theft and data breaches. This insurance may also cover you for other digital delivery methods e.g. one to one video consultations and telephone consultations.

Confidentiality and Health Care Professionals

Confidentiality of any information that is shared in a VGC applies just the same as it does in any clinical interaction. It is important however that as healthcare professionals we keep this information in line with the specific focus of the VGC e.g. whilst a patient may give consent to share information about their Asthma you would not refer to any other medical information e.g. 'so now that you are pregnant how is this affecting your asthma' The caveat to this is of course if the patient raises this in the VGC session e.g. 'now that I am pregnant what should I do differently to manage my asthma?' As with any consultation the same standards of privacy used for face to face consultations should be followed and you should follow any practice identification process.

Confidentiality and VGC Group Participants

Both the facilitator and the clinician should support patients to maintain confidentiality throughout the session, this is done by following best practice guidelines set out, using the route map and in session templates. It is really important for the facilitator to set this up from the outset using the group etiquette / principles template to support this. It is also important to bring this to life for patients and be implicit around the no recording /photos or screen shots permitted throughout the session. Remember VGC are an option for patients so consent should be given at the start of each session.

Patient Consent

By agreeing to join a VGC patients are giving implied consent much in the same way as they do in one to one and e-consultations. As VGC's involve the sharing of medical information e.g. hbA1c/Blood pressure and patients are sharing information about themselves and their condition with others VGCs require more explicit consent. This consent includes them being sent a confidentiality form, along with any other patient information you provide for VGC's.

It is important that you check your patients understand what they are consenting to prior to joining a live VGC. Please note young people below the age of 16 years must be accompanied in the session by their parent or guardian.

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