Telehealth - Telephone Only Encounters

CMS allows services provided by _telephone only_ to be billed when certain criteria are met (details below). Under COVID-19 this billable service includes both established and new patient encounters.

This is an option for when the patient is unable to connect to an audio/visual platform such as FaceTime or Zoom for a Telehealth visit. Established patients needing medication refills for a previously diagnosed condition is another example.

NOTE: Commercial carriers have not indicated that they have adopted the new rate methodology and are likely following the old reimbursement rate methodology. If this changes, reimbursement updates will be provided.

Telehealth – Telephone Only Encounter Codes			
Code	Description	Old Nat'l Medicare Reimbursement Rate	New Nat'l Medicare Reimbursement Rate As of 4/30/2020
99441	5-10 minutes of medical discussion with physician, PA or NP	$14.44	$46.19
99442	11-20 minutes of medical discussion with physician, PA or NP	$28.15	$76.15
99443	21-30 minutes of medical discussion with physician, PA or NP	$41.14	$110.43

Important Billing Criteria

- **The encounter must be scheduled or requested by the patient.** If requested by a physician, PA or NP, the visit cannot be billed as a telephone virtual encounter.

- **Only time spent in medical discussion by the physician, PA or NP may be counted when selecting the code.**

- Telephone codes are not billable if:
  - The discussion relates to an in office or audio/visual E/M service that took place within the previous 7 days;
  - The call results in an E/M visit or procedure within the following 24 hours or soonest available appointment;
  - The discussion relates to a service for which there is an active, postoperative global period.

Documentation

- Ensure that encounter with the clinic Telehealth service location is created in NextGen PM with insurance attached.

- Document the amount of time the physician, PA or NP spent on medical discussion in the phone note.

- Document who the medical discussion was with. For example: patient, parent or guardian.

- Include the following consent in the phone note: "_Patient/parent/legal guardian verbally consented to the patient's telehealth audio encounter. Telephone encounter was performed due to coronavirus restrictions. The side effects, risks and benefits of treatment were discussed._"

- Document pertinent details from the conversation such as the reason for the telephone call, pertinent history that was obtained or reviewed and medical decision making that was required.

Example: Call received from patient's mother. Patient was diagnosed with eczema on the arms and trunk two months ago, at which time Triamcinolone cream BID x2 weeks was prescribed. Mother states the rash resolved but seems to have come back about 1 week ago. Rash is described as pink, rough and itchy at times. Advised that this is likely a recurrence of the eczema. Recommend restarting Triamcinolone cream BID x 2 weeks; discussed not to use on groin or face and reviewed the potential risk of thinning skin with long term use of topical steroids. If not improved in 2 weeks, schedule a Telehealth audio/visual appointment. Patient's mother verbally consented to the patient's telehealth audio encounter. Telephone encounter was performed due to coronavirus restrictions. The side effects, risks and benefits of treatment were discussed. I spent 15 minutes discussing the patient's condition and treatment plan with patient's mother.

Helpful Tips

- For audio/visual visit (via FaceTime, Zoom, etc.), use E/M codes following the Telehealth Audio Visual Visits – E/M Coding guide and Billing will apply Telehealth modifiers.

- Telephone codes include review of patient photos by the physician/PA/NP. If photos were emailed, please upload to the patient's chart in addition to documenting the phone call details.
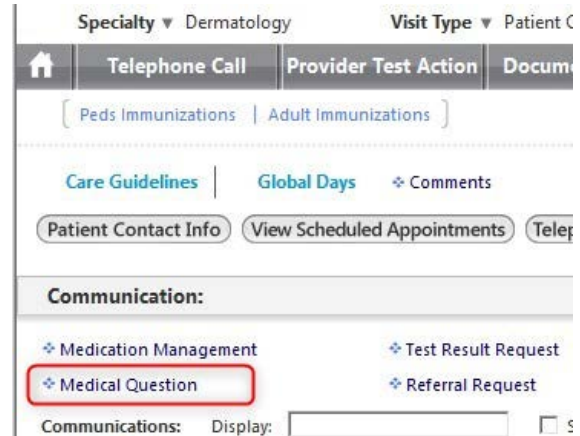
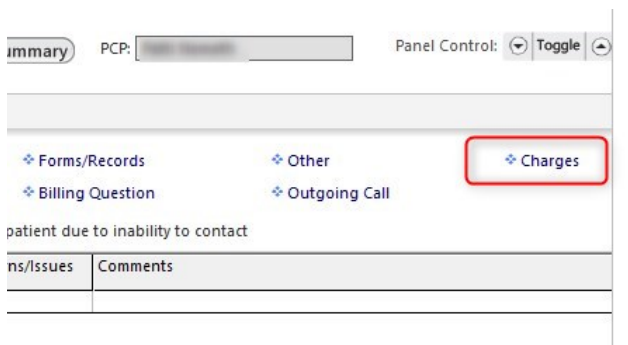# Telehealth - Telephone Only Encounters

NextGen

1. Lay a *Telephone-Call* template under the **Tele** EHR encounter and choose *Patient Communication* as visit type.
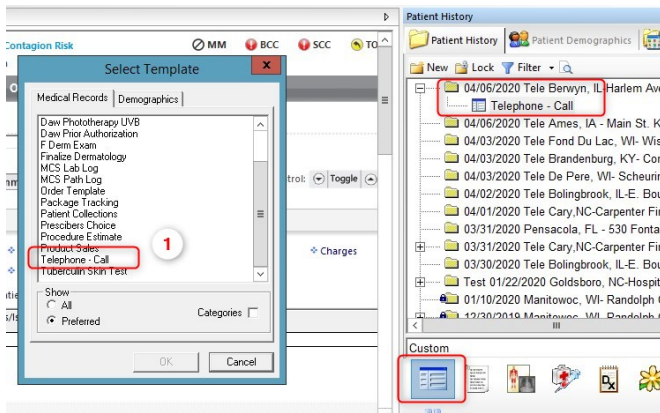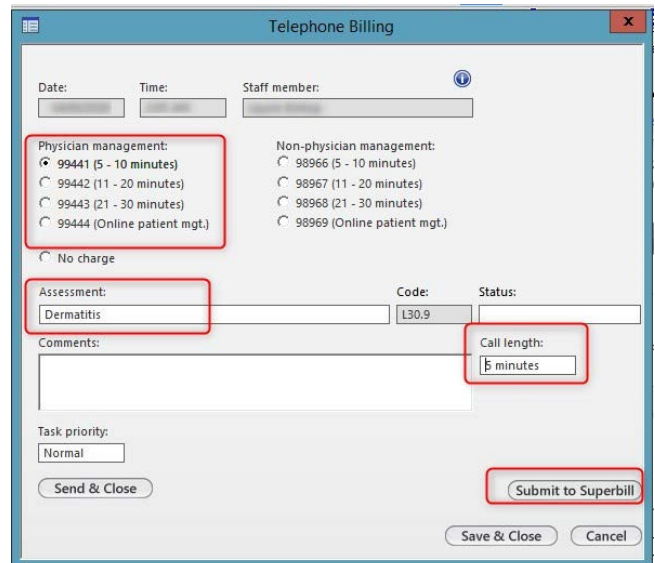

2. Select *Medical Question* link to document all details of the phone call and total time.
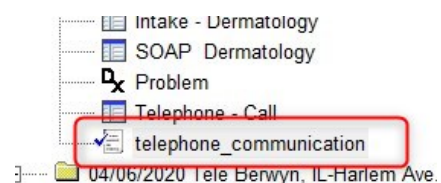

3. Select Charges link to enter diagnosis and select appropriate telephone code and Submit to Superbill.

4. Charge Screen:

5. Click Preview Document at bottom of phone template. This will generate a document in the physician/PA/NP's PAQ to sign off on.
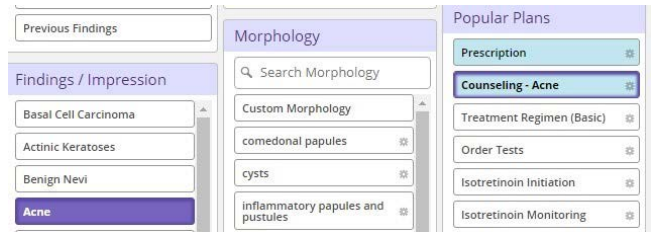
Telehealth - Telephone Only Encounters

EMA

1. Create a new visit and set facility to **Tele** clinic location.

2. In the VER (Virtual Exam Room), add the diagnoses and plans that are applicable to the phone visit.

3. Add the plan *Telephone E/M Service* to easily add the correct code to the encounter and any other details.

4. Verify billing is correct and finalize note.