TeleOB & Maternal Fetal Telehealth

FACT SHEET

Introduction to TeleOB for Maternal Fetal Medicine

The acceptance of telehealth, or "TeleOB," in prenatal, obstetric, and maternal-fetal medicine has evolved significantly. Healthcare professionals and patients increasingly view telehealth as a viable option, driven by its benefits in accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and convenience. The widespread use of telehealth has demonstrated high patient and provider satisfaction, especially for those in remote areas or with limited access to specialized care.

A study involving 253 maternal-fetal medicine patients revealed that 83% of healthcare providers supported telehealth as an option, citing ease of communication and the non-necessity of physical presence as significant advantages

Importantly, 73% of patients favored telehealth for future visits, underscoring its acceptability and the perceived reduction in travel time.*

The shift to TeleOB highlights its vast potential in enhancing maternal healthcare. By incorporating technologies like wireless, handheld ultrasound devices, TeleOB enables real-time fetal imaging remotely, extending specialized care to underserved areas.

This innovation improves prenatal diagnostics and ensures comprehensive, quality care, setting a new standard for maternal and fetal health and making healthcare more accessible and effective.

** Application of telemedicine video visits in a maternal-fetal medicine practice at the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. 2021 Aug 24. National Library of Medicine.*

The Impact of TeleOB on Healthcare Providers

For healthcare workers, the message is clear: TeleOB not only upholds but enhances maternal and fetal health outcomes by facilitating regular and convenient interactions between patients and healthcare providers. This mode of care delivery proves essential for increasing the reach and efficiency of prenatal and postpartum care, reinforcing its potential as a mainstay in modern healthcare practices. Furthermore, it dramatically increases the accessibility of specialized maternal care, especially in rural or underserved areas where traditional healthcare services may be limited.

By utilizing TeleOB, providers can extend new services to their patients, offer consistent, high-quality care and advice without the need for physical travel, reducing stress for expectant mothers and optimizing time management for clinicians.

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Benefits of Tele-Obstetrics

TeleOB partnerships are experiencing steady expansion and are poised for continued growth, driven by numerous benefits that significantly improve access and quality of maternal healthcare, including:

- **Increased Access in Underserved Areas**: TeleOB expands healthcare reach, providing essential services to areas lacking in maternal-fetal specialists.
- **Specialist Availability**: Helps mitigate specialist shortages by facilitating remote consultations, crucial for patients in geographically isolated regions.
- **Cost Reduction**: Significantly lowers the costs associated with accessing care, such as travel expenses, for disenfranchised women.
- **Reduced Travel Time**: Minimizes 'windshield time,' allowing for more immediate and consistent care, especially critical for high-risk pregnancies.
- **Language and Accessibility Barriers**: Bridges language gaps and improves accessibility for patients with disabilities by enabling access to interpreters and specialized resources online during consultations.
- **Improved Prenatal Care**: Ensures continuity of prenatal care and effective postpartum follow-up, offering high-quality care regardless of location.
- **Operational Efficiency**: Enhances the efficiency of healthcare providers by reducing the need for in-person visits, making care delivery more sustainable.
- **Enhanced Outcomes**: Promotes better maternal and fetal health outcomes through regular, convenient interactions between healthcare providers and patients.

Case Study: Rural OB Access and Maternal Services

The Rural OB Access and Maternal Services network (ROAMS) provides telehealth and obstetric (OB) care to five rural counties in New Mexico. ROAMS' initial goal was to reduce maternal mortality and improve OB access to their communities.

This gives parents at-home access to OB services when they used to travel up to 5 hours by car to see a physician in person. ROAMS also provides Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM) kits that automatically send medical data, like blood pressure and blood glucose levels, directly to the physicians monitoring their pregnancy.

ROAMS effectively bridges the gap in obstetric care by providing telehealth services and home monitoring kits to expectant parents in New Mexico's rural "OB deserts," significantly improving access and reducing the need for long travel to see specialists.

Source:Teleheatlh.HHS.Gov

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Telehealth Solutions for Obstetrics

As healthcare providers consider integrating or enhancing TeleOB services, the selection of accurate, affordable equipment, backed by strong customer becomes paramount. This involves choosing partners who offer not only advanced telehealth hardware and software but also ensure seamless integration and continued service.

A comprehensive partner also provides access to a network of remote OB specialists. This network is a pivotal resource for healthcare practices, allowing for the retention of patients through specialist referrals for OB and ultrasound services, which is particularly vital for high-risk pregnancies.

A TeleOB telehealth solutions provider should offer a range of telehealth carts, from advanced units with laptop to simple tablet stands, tailoring to varied practice needs. Additionally, digital stethoscopes and cameras for remote examinations, alongside compact, wireless ultrasound devices, should be available, ensuring compatibility with various mobile platforms for comprehensive medical imaging.

A solutions provider must also deliver telehealth software that supports secure video conferencing complete with online waiting rooms, document sharing, and seamless peripheral integration.

Comprehensive service and support are crucial for ensuring reliable TeleOB operations. Program support should include assistance with clinical protocols, workflow, patient scheduling, and reimbursement, facilitating a smooth launch of TeleOB services followed by efficient ongoing operations.

Setting up a TeleOB practice involves choosing the right technology and services, along with a network of TeleOB specialists ready for patient referrals. This allows healthcare providers to offer services that are effective, sustainable, and scalable, making a significant difference in the quality of maternal and fetal healthcare delivery.

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Optimizing Telehealth in Maternal and Fetal Care

TeleOB represents a significant advancement in maternal and fetal healthcare, particularly in the domain of health equity and access. Telehealth enables healthcare professionals to deliver high-quality care remotely, using tools like remote ultrasounds and real-time fetal imaging.

These innovations make maternal fetal healthcare more accessible, especially in remote or underserved areas, and allow for timely medical interventions critical for mother and baby health. TeleOB also improves healthcare efficiency by reducing the need for in-person visits, helping providers manage resources better and decrease overall healthcare costs.

Optimizing telehealth in maternal and fetal care not only helps bridge the gap in healthcare access but also sets new standards in care delivery, aiming for broader healthcare access and equity. As TeleOB evolves, it will continue to transform maternal care, making it more efficient, personalized, and accessible. This ongoing development is crucial for achieving superior health outcomes in maternal and fetal healthcare.

Choosing the Right Partner for TeleOB Initiatives

When launching TeleOB services, the selection of the right solutions partner is critical—a partner who offers not only telehealth carts, hardware, exam peripherals, software, and portable ultrasound solutions; a comprehensive partner also provides robust customer support and access to a network of remote OB specialists.

Selecting a TeleOB partner with an established reputation and strong references among healthcare providers and the community is crucial. It's important that the partner is recognized for prioritizing patient care and client service, ensuring that they are committed to delivering the highest quality of healthcare support and services. Ensure that network providers are properly licensed and credentialed to provide virtual care to patients in your community. The technology should be easy to use for all staff members and patients, regardless of their age or technical skills, to ensure accessibility and facilitate wider adoption.

Partnering with a telehealth solutions provider that understands the dynamic nature of healthcare and can offer continuous adaptation and support is key to enhancing both patient and provider satisfaction, ultimately contributing to the community's health and wellbeing.

About Global Partnership for Telehealth

For over two decades, GPT has steadfastly pursued a singular vision: to amplify the transformative power of telehealth and virtual care for everyone. With TeleOB solutions from GPT, healthcare providers can deliver care and connect their patients to MFM specialists, improving fetal outcomes, maternal health, and provider convenience, while lowering costs and generating sustainable practice revenue.

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