

ATMS POLICY

Online Audio/Visual Consultation

Preamble

Initial face-to-face consultations have traditionally been a hallmark of holistic healthcare. Useful clinical information is gained from face-to-face consultations. This useful clinical information includes clinical examination (e.g. blood pressure, pulse), observation, gait specifics, acknowledgment of physical ailments associated with nutritional deficiencies, recognition of emotion during interviews, establishment of rapport, among others. It should be noted that a client may behave differently in audio/visual vs face-to-face consultations. As such, where possible and practicable, ATMS still recommends the initial consultation be conducted face to face; or online with a visual component, rather than over the phone / audio-only.

Online audio/visual consultations are an alternative to face-to-face consultations and have become increasingly common for both practitioners and consumers as they allow more convenient and accessible healthcare delivery without compromising client safety.

Purpose & Scope

This Policy sets out ATMS's expectations of members who practise online audio/visual consultations. The Online Audio/Visual Consultations Policy has been established by ATMS for the ethical and professional conduct of online audio/visual consultations by ATMS members. ATMS members may only provide online audio/visual consultations where this falls within their current scope of practice for that modality.

ATMS members are accountable for their clinical decision making and have moral, ethical and legal obligations for the provision of safe and competent practice. Any breach of the ATMS Code of Conduct, ATMS Member Privacy Guidelines and the Online Audio/Visual Consultations Policy may render an ATMS member liable for removal from the Register of Members.

Definition

Online Audio/Visual Consultations are a way to provide or assist in the provision of client care at a distance using information and communication technologies. Online Audio/Visual Consultations include consultations provided over the internet (i.e. using audio and/or video conferencing technologies such as Zoom) or via telephone/mobile phone.

Online Audio/Visual Consultation Requirements**1. General**

- 1.1. Practitioners must adhere to the requirements of the ATMS Code of Conduct, ATMS Guidelines and Policies.
- 1.2. Practitioners must comply with all relevant and applicable State, Territory and Federal laws and regulations.
- 1.3. Practitioners must only provide services within the scope of their practice.

2. Prior To The Online Audio/Visual Consultation

- 2.1. The practitioner must obtain the client's consent, or the parent's/guardian's consent in the case of a client with a disability, or a client under the age of 18 (and not assessed by the practitioner to be a 'mature minor' and capable of providing their own consent), to conduct an online audio/visual consultation. Consent may include for example, the client confirming they wish to book an online/phone consultation at time of booking, or via email.
- 2.2. In the event of the online audio/visual consultation involving a minor, or person with a disability, a parent/guardian must be present during the entire consultation (unless the minor has been assessed by the practitioner as being a 'mature' minor and the presence of a parent/guardian is not otherwise legally required).
- 2.3. Adequate internet connectivity is required to support audio and video quality for consultation purposes. The practitioner must ensure they have appropriate technology (e.g. password protected computer, internet access and connection) to conduct the online audio/visual consultation. The practitioner must use internet antivirus and security software and other technical security to secure client confidentiality.
- 2.4. The client identity must be verified to the practitioner's reasonable satisfaction before the online audio/visual consultation is provided.
- 2.5. The practitioner must not record the online audio-visual consultation unless the client gives their prior consent. If prior consent is granted, the recording/s of the consultations must fulfil the requirements of the Privacy Act.
 - 2.5.1. If client requests, the original recordings and all copies are to be returned to the client, or their estate, according to the Privacy Act, or by request.
- 2.6. The practitioner must determine, to the best of their ability and in accordance with their scope of practice, the appropriateness for each client to receive the online audio/visual consultation prior to the first consultation and subsequent consultations. In the event of a change in the appropriateness of the online audio/visual consultation, a face-to-face consultation should be organised for further evaluation with the primary care practitioner or another practitioner if required.



- 2.7. The practitioner must determine how comfortable the person is with using this form of consultation prior to the online audio/visual consultation taking place. The client's experience and comfort with the use of audio/visual equipment and computers will be variable and impact on their likelihood to embrace the concept of using online audio/visual technology. It has been shown that commitment by the health care professional to actively support and encourage the client in the early stages of the introduction of the technology is vital for long term success.
- 2.8. The following should be considered by the practitioner and where appropriate, discussed or identified with the client prior to the initial online audio/visual consultation and subsequent consultations:
- 2.8.1. The name, profession and organisation/location of all practitioners conducting or participating in the online audio/visual consultation.
- 2.8.2. The client in the online audio/visual consultation.
- 2.8.3. The only parties present during the audio/visual consultation will be the client, any support person nominated by the client and the practitioner/s.
- 2.8.4. An overview of how the technologies of the online audio/visual consultation work including how to connect to the technology and support in utilising the computer microphones/video as required.
- 2.8.5. The choice to decline participation in the online audio/visual consultation at any time and the alternatives available (e.g. face-to-face consultation or referral to practitioner who offers face to face if the practitioner does not).
- 2.8.6. Acknowledgement that in the unlikely event that the client does not wish to continue with the online audio/visual consultation they can end the session, but that consultation fees may still apply.
- 2.8.7. Contingency plans should technology fail or be insufficient during the online audio/visual consultation.
- 2.8.8. The practitioner should inform clients about the cost of the consultation and any potential costs of treatment (e.g. supplements, formulas, postage). The procedure for payment must also be noted before the online audio/visual consultation takes place.

3. During The Online Audio/Visual Consultation

- 3.1. Online audio/visual consultations can result in raised voices and transmission of sound into surrounding areas. The online audio/visual consultation must therefore be conducted in an environment that is sound-proof (e.g. a closed office) to maintain client confidentiality.
- 3.2. All information provided or received before, during and after an online audio/visual consultation and details of all participants involved should be recorded in the client's file. This information should be documented contemporaneously (during the consultation), or shortly afterwards, in either hard copy or electronically, in accordance with ATMS policies and procedures. High level case-taking is essential for optimal client care. At the written request of the client, a copy of this information is to be securely forwarded to them with appropriate cost charged for this service.
- 3.3.



If at any time, the practitioner considers that assessments such as blood pressure measurement or any form of physical examination is required as part of the consultation process, the practitioner should inform the client and either organise to conduct the examination or assessment themselves at a subsequent consultation if the practitioner offers face to face consultations, or refer the client to a suitably qualified and experienced healthcare practitioner who does offer face to face consultations, or can otherwise conduct the examination. Where appropriate and depending on the type of assessment and client willingness, the practitioner may be able to assist the client or parent/guardian or support person to 'self assess' either themselves or their child during an online audio-visual consultation.

- 3.4. At the end of the online audio/visual consultation, the total cost of the consultation and recommended treatments (supplements, formulas) must be stated and payment from the client must be arranged. Delivery/postage arrangements must also be discussed if relevant.
- 3.5. After payment, a receipt must be given and the receipt must provide details and method of consultation (e.g. Online Consultation, Phone Consultation etc).

4. After The Online Audio/Visual Consultation

- 4.1. For appropriate record of the consultation, the practitioner should consider whether additional documentation may be required in addition to standard clinical note taking. For example :
 - 4.1.1. That the consultation was conducted by audio/visual link.
 - 4.1.2. Client-end location of the audio/visual consultation.
 - 4.1.3. Client's explicit consent to the online audio/visual consultation.
 - 4.1.4. Persons present and client's explicit consent for other parties to be present.
 - 4.1.5. The recording of any still image during the audio-visual consultation, if any was taken.
 - 4.1.6. Any period that the practitioner was not present in the room.
 - 4.1.7. Any technical malfunctions during the audio/visual consultation including poor image or voice quality.
- 4.2. The client file must be stored securely, as per ATMS Policy and Guidelines.

Cultural Respect

Practitioners should be mindful of cultural needs and preferences prior to and during online audio-visual consultations in particular about personal images and the recording of personal images.



Interpreter Assistance

Where an interpreter is required for non-English speaking client, accredited interpreters should be used where available. The interpreter should be briefed about the online audio/visual consultation, how to deal with cultural and other issues that may arise during the session as well as any special techniques that may be used during the process.

Hearing Impaired Assistance

For hearing impaired clients, a deaf relay interpreter may be required. Auslan (Australian sign language) interpreting is usually conducted simultaneously so the practitioner will need to speak at a moderate pace.

Similarly, the deaf relay interpreter will also need to be briefed about the online audio-visual consultation, how to deal with cultural and other issues that may arise during the session. If there are complex concepts to be discussed, you may need to set out the best method to communicate these together with the interpreter.

The practitioner should maintain their role during the consultation session as the interpreter does not conduct the session.

Insurance Coverage

ATMS recommends that all members providing online audio/visual consultation check with their insurer regarding appropriate insurance coverage for their business activities including professional liability and other legally required insurances as applicable. ATMS recommends cyber insurance for all members, particularly those conducting most of their consultations remotely.

Complaint Procedures

ATMS will review written complaints regarding the provision of online audio/visual consultations by any of its members as per ATMS Complaint Policy and Complaint Procedures.

Further Information

Related Policies:

ATMS Code of Conduct

ATMS Member Privacy Guidelines

