

COVID-19 a short-term challenge, telewound a lifetime change

As the world comes to terms with new ways of working as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, technology provides the perfect social-distancing tool. In the everyday life of millennials, this is the norm, but in the world of health care perhaps less understood or normal. This is changing and changing rapidly.

The social distancing and self-isolation/quarantine necessity of the pandemic has forced governments and health care organisations to think differently. But also, to think and act quickly. Technology is the perfect solution to connect us in the virtual world. Ironically, we do this every day of our life on a social basis but that's not the case in health care. Telehealth solutions have been around for some time, but are sparingly used in health care compared with our social structures.

Thankfully “pandemic panic” has highlighted the need for minimal contact solutions in health care to both government and payors. As such, both have moved quickly, in most geographies across the world, to utilise telehealth approaches to manage the health of their citizens/patients while fulfilling the social-distancing requirement of the pandemic.

So what does this mean for patients with wounds. Persons with chronic wounds require regular care. As such, regular contact is inevitable not only for assessment but also for treatment (ie, dressing changes). Can we redesign the way in which wound care is delivered to fulfil the new norm of social distancing? We can! Some elements have existed for some time (eg, self-care or family care) and others have been tested (eg, telewound options) but none are the routine. That's about to change!

Technology can help both patients and caregivers. Through the use of telewound/telemedicine, the face-to-face interaction between both can be more remote, helping with the social distancing required. Caregivers can still interact with their patients providing advice to the

patient and their family through technology. Remote assessment/diagnosis is also possible to limit the number of face-to-face interactions.

Think “teenager”! How many young people interact with each other like we did before technology? How has that changed in recent times. Think texting rather than calling. How many of us prefer to text than talk? One of us at least is guilty as charged!

The world has been preparing for social distancing for the past decade or so. But not in health care. The slow pace of change within health care is about to change. It already has with the announcement of increased access and payment for telemedicine options by many governments around the world the evolution has begun.

It's time for us in the wound care world to make this happen for our patients. Let's use this opportunity to change the way in which we manage our patients. Seek out technology that can change things for your patient and organisations. Bring these to the attention of your organisation as part of the new COVID world. Through the use of telewound and patient app approaches, not only can you fulfil the needs of social distancing but you can start to change the way in which wound care is delivered for the future. That includes beyond COVID-19.

Governments have already signalled that changes regarding the use and reimbursement for telemedicine is not a short-term challenge but rather a change for good. We can make sure that is the case for the persons suffering from acute and chronic wounds.

Embrace the change and seek the solution. Let's beat COVID-19 in the short term, but also change the way in which we deliver wound care for ever.

Douglas Queen, Editor, *IWJ*
Keith Harding, Editor-in-Chief, *IWJ*