COVID-19 has led to unprecedented demand on healthcare services. To reduce the transmission of infection there has been increased use of remote consultations (RCN 2020). The need for remote consultations will continue as it maximises capacity but also increases accessibility to healthcare services. This has been identified in the NHS England toolkit for Primary care on online consultations September 2019 (NHS England 2019).

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Hints and tips around delivering remote consultations:

The decision for holding a remote consultation should be based on the initial triage process. The remote consultations guidance under COVID-2019 restrictions document issued by the RCN (2020) details a number of aspects that need to be incorporated in the triage process when making the decision whether a remote consultation is suitable. These include:

- To assess the severity of symptoms both physical and psychological
- Previous knowledge of the patient/client as well as their family and wider situation, alongside access to their clinical records
- Whether you will need to physically examine the patient/client. For example, some consultations focus more on the discussion between the healthcare professional and the patient as well as the visual observations of the patient rather than the necessity of a physical examination.
- Previous medical history for example, seeing a patient for a follow up or review of a pre-existing condition; a history of safeguarding concerns; or an infant who has been failing to thrive may trigger a need to see the person/child face-to-face

The General Medical Council (GMC) have issued a simple algorithm that can be used. click here:

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Undertaking effective remote consultations

It is important to decide what technology and (where appropriate), which platform you are going to use to hold your consultation as this will dictate your consultation approach. You will need to consider:

- The technology that is available to the patient but also their confidence and competency level in using that technology. Remember, you may need to switch the technology you use halfway through the consultation based on what the patient discusses. For example, your consultation may start with a phone call but may switch to video consultation later, so that you are visually able to see a part of the body.
- Think about the purpose of the consultation. For example, do you need to physically see the patient?
- Consider that the consultation may be recorded by the patient
- Also, you may wish to signpost the patient through this discussion to various websites to support them in managing their condition.

Consultation style:

Ensure that you adopt your consultation skills to suit the technology you are using. Consider how you are going to open the consultation, how you are going to bring the consultation to end? Remember prescribing over the telephone needs to be compliant with the Prescribing Competency Framework 2016 Update issued by the RPS. In addition, all healthcare professionals undertaking remote consultations need to be compliant with their professional body.

For further information on performing a good asthma reviews please see our previous factsheets on here.

References:

NHS England (2019) Using Online Consultations In Primary Care (2019) Available on: https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/online-consultations-summarytocolkit-for-practices-dec-2019.pdf

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RPS (2016) Prescribing Competency Framework Available from: https://www.rpharms.com/Portals/0/RPS%20document%20library/Open%20access/Professional%20standards/Prescribing%20competency%20framework/prescribingcompetency-framework.pdf?ver=2019-02-13-163215-030

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