

Distance Medicine: 1-page summary

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1. Overview-

- 25% of all contact in medicine is over the telephone
- Length of typical call: mean of 3.4 minutes
- Reasons for calls
 - 39% for new/acute concerns; 61% for chronic conditions
 - 45% of calls relate to a symptom or complaint; 16% relate to test results and 14% relate to medical or device questions. Other reasons are rare.
 - 64% of calls require only reassurance
- In general, telephone contact leads to better patient satisfaction (mostly related to non-urgent calls)
- Emedicine- newer, not well studied but growing rapidly; payment model unclear but patients seem to like it and can improve access

2. Tips for optimizing telephone medicine

- **Do not hesitate to call the back up attending for help!!!**
- Give the patient a chance to tell you what's going on. If they are unable ask to speak with someone else who is present.
- Ask who else is in the room and make sure the patient is able to speak freely.
- Give clear and simple directions and have the patient repeat them back in his/her own words.
- Call patients back a few hours later if you are concerned; this can often prevent ED visits.
- Access the patient's chart in EPIC for more information, and document the call
- If a situation seems emergent (or might be) you can call 911 and send an ambulance to the patient's home or call the police.

References:

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