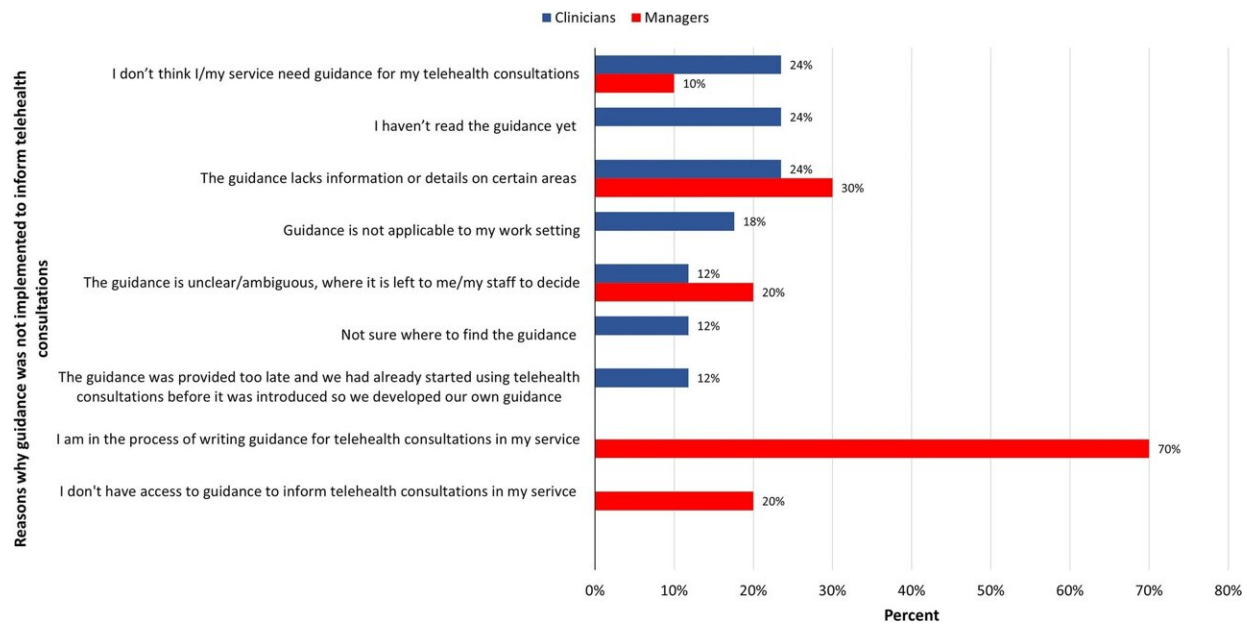


Report calls for national telehealth guidelines for allied health professions in the NHS

December 5 2022



Reasons why clinicians and service managers did not implement guidance to inform telehealth consultations. Credit: *Human Resources for Health* (2022). DOI: 10.1186/s12960-022-00778-1

Work led by scientists at Staffordshire University explores the organizational readiness of the 14 allied health professions (AHP) to use telehealth—the use of electronic information and telecommunications technologies—to support patient care and public health.

It is based on a survey of more than 600 clinicians and managers working for allied health professional services within the NHS. Responses showed that there was a disconnect between clinicians, who felt that some of the guidelines were ambiguous, and their managers. It also revealed gaps in the guidance when it comes to protection from litigation and dealing with emergencies

Senior author and Director of the Centre for Biomechanics and Rehabilitation Technologies, Professor Nachi Chockalingam explained that digital transformation was proceeding slowly when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and most AHP services found themselves unprepared for the delivery of [telehealth](#) services.

Professor Chockalingam said, "While health care systems typically need to develop policies and workforce training to move to a new model of care delivery, some of these phases were bypassed during the COVID-19 pandemic because of the urgency required."

"Our [survey](#) results show that allied health professional services within our NHS are not fully equipped with the knowledge or skills to deliver telehealth. It also highlights that people who desperately need these services are excluded from current guidelines, which may widen health inequalities. We need uniform AHP telehealth guidelines both here in the UK and globally."

Dr. Nicky Eddison, Associate Professor who co-led the study added, "As a clinician I strongly feel that that telehealth implementation processes should be given equal consideration as technological aspects. The NHS and the professional bodies need to prioritize structured guidelines and [staff training](#) to ensure a successful [digital transformation](#) of the NHS AHP services".

The report highlights that digital inclusion approaches are needed to

ensure that vulnerable population groups at risk of exclusion can benefit as digitally enabled care goes mainstream across the NHS.

Associate Professor Dr. Aoife Healy said, "Coordinating this program of work has brought to light that future telehealth [guidelines](#) needed to include clear recommendations on patient eligibility criteria, consultation length, training requirements and safety considerations to limit unintended risks to patients, and widening health inequalities of vulnerable groups".

The report is published in the journal *Human Resources for Health*.

More information: Enza Leone et al, Do UK Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) have sufficient guidelines and training to provide telehealth patient consultations?, *Human Resources for Health* (2022). [DOI: 10.1186/s12960-022-00778-1](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12960-022-00778-1)

Provided by Staffordshire University

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