Increasing cyber and ethical risks to safety means care homes' need for insurance protection is greater than ever

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Credit: *Implications of telemedicine in care homes: considerations for the evolving risk landscape*, (2023).

The cyber and ethical risks posed by telemedicine to care homes could

outweigh its value unless safeguarding steps are taken, says a new white paper.

The paper, by Bayes Business School in collaboration with Lockton [insurance](link) brokers, investigates the variety of risks faced by [care homes](link), and the resulting need for robust insurance policies. These include increasingly sophisticated online threats, [ethical concerns](link) which could lead to patient isolation and overreliance, and legal worries because of a lack of a regulatory framework concerning telemedicine being introduced in the UK.

Telemedicine is becoming increasingly common in the UK, because of its ability to remotely track and monitor patients' health data. The digital service uses a safeguarded cloud-based platform accessible by [health professionals](link) and can detect irregularities and sudden changes to a patient's status in real time, as well as administering medication. There are already some effective solutions in the marketplace, with medtech companies, such as Lifelight, creating efficiency gains for [healthcare providers](link), and convenience and comfort for patients through contactless smartphone monitoring of patient vital signs.

Bayes and Lockton, the world's largest independent insurance brokerage, say the insurance implications of introducing telemedicine solutions to care homes are substantial and care home providers must consider their approach across strategic, operational, technological, and business risks.

With care homes housing vulnerable individuals that often require consistent attention, support and care, the failure of digital health services—in such scenarios as system outages, failing products, and technology errors—could result in large liability claims because of errors such as deletion of crucial information relating to a symptom, inappropriate levels of medication being administered by care givers, or having the wrong medications prescribed. Steps to improve online

security include multi-factor authentication for remote access, secure offline backups, updated software protocols and high-level employee awareness training.

The authors say that implementing a vigorous cyber [risk management](link) framework is crucial for care homes, to increase organizational resiliency and ensure operational continuity, as well as secure the appropriate terms and coverage from the insurance market.

While there has been progress, concerns that existed a decade ago remain today, including a lack of resource outside of larger hospitals, with increasingly robust IT systems required to repel the risks.

The increasing need for telemedicine remains a hot topic. In January, it was reported that the NHS was exploring opening more 'virtual wards' for patients in England to cut down on waiting times. The value of telemedicine is already being felt in other parts of the UK, with patients in Wales with long-term health conditions trailing the use of telehealth, in partnership with national and local health and technology services.

Co-authors Dr. Cormac Bryce and Bayes MSc student Aishwarya Vinny say that while technology plays a critical role in healthcare, it cannot replace more traditional methods, adding that insurance cover is a critical aspect to care home covering the variety of threats that come with telemedicine.

Dr. Bryce, Course Director on the MSc in Insurance and Risk Management, said, "The rapidly evolving list of considerations for care providers means insurance cover is absolutely necessary. Since the onset of COVID, there has been a rapid rise in the use of telemedicine solutions globally, and while the value of medtech in supporting patients is clear for all to see, that does not make it infallible."

"Medical malpractice may be an unintentional consequence of [telemedicine](#) as nothing can replace [human interactions](#), which is especially valuable for those in care homes who are twice as likely to suffer severe loneliness than the wider community."

"In January, the government announced that it would spend up to £250 million on extra beds in care homes to help discharge patients to free up hospital beds. With more patients potentially coming through the doors, the ever more sophisticated threats from cyber attackers, plus ethical and legal concerns, must be taken even more seriously. Care homes must tread cautiously if they are to balance patient care and ensuring their own cover."

  More information: Paper: [assets.ctfassets.net/zr7mmeciv … Whitepaper_12.22.pdf](#)

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