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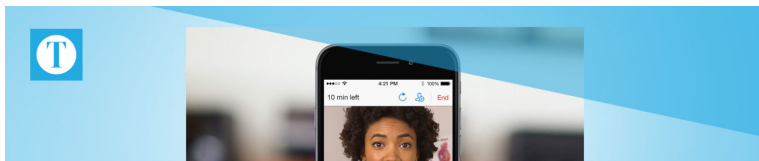
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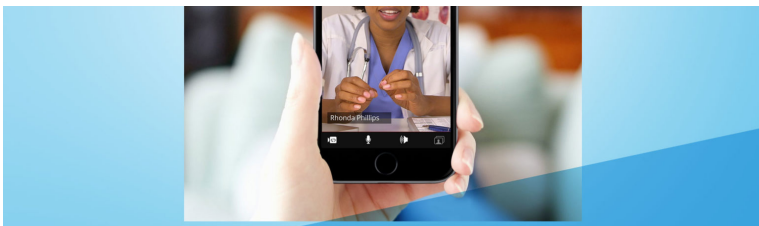
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NEWS

Telehealth services for mental, physical care becoming new normal

By Katie Pickens APRIL 2, 2020 | 12:07 AM **UPDATED APRIL 1, 2020 | 10:52 PM**





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Telehealth services have become the new normal for both physical and mental care after regulations have limited in-person services due to COVID-19.

Technology has been a blessing, according to those who've switched from in-person care to online services — a variety of apps and methods including FaceTime, Zoom and Skype are being utilized regularly.

Jessica Hatfield, an occupational therapist and owner of TheraTree Pediatric Therapy Services, said access to therapy has become a larger barrier than ever before.



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“It’s become necessary for us to be healthy at home, even in health care, in order to decrease the spread of COVID-19,” she said. “The moment we realized it was a very real possibility that families may need to stay at home, we began implementing a

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telehealth structure into our clinic.”

TheraTree, which supports development for children by “growing the whole child — mind, body and spirit,” was the first practice in the area to get the approval from the Green River District Health Department to implement telehealth for outpatient services.

“We have absolutely seen an increase in anxiety levels from families, and understandably so,” Hatfield said. “We are all in uncharted waters, constantly trying to make the right decisions that are sustainable and support the highest possible quality of life. It’s our role to throw out as many life preservers as we can through telehealth. Your family is not alone.”

Though many doctors have made the switch, it hasn’t been a smooth transition across the board.

Progressive Sports Therapy said they are monitoring several of their patients via telehealth, but their team is facing a lot of restrictions because Medicare patients have not been approved yet.

Still, the online treatment itself has been fairly effective.

“It has gone pretty well,” said Michael Dugger, physical therapy doctor at Progressive. “It’s a good way to check in on



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patients. I use FaceTime most of the time.”

Because Progressive Sports Therapy can only see one patient in person at a time, online services have been crucial for maintaining contact with those who don’t need immediate assistance.

Patients usually speak with Dugger via video for about five minutes each appointment to discuss the therapy beforehand, and he spends the next 30-45 minutes coaching them through it. While he would love to do more manual physical therapy with his patients, Dugger said telehealth has been a good way to keep his clients engaged.

“It’s just a transition for everybody,” he said.
“It’s the best we can do in this situation.”

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The Owensboro Health coronavirus hotline is available 24/7 by calling 877-888-6647. Call the hotline before seeking in-person care. More information from OH [can be found here](#).

For the latest information and data on COVID-19 in Kentucky visit kycovid19.ky.gov or dial the Kentucky state

hotline at 800-722-5725.

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April 2, 2020 | 12:07 am

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