BEYOND ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN PRIMARY CARE

BC family physicians are beginning to expand in-person services beyond those deemed essential during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The BC Health Quality Matrix provides a framework to consider the benefits and risks of providing in-person or virtual care for individual patients. Determining clinical appropriateness for virtual care visits provides more decision-making support.

**Safety**
- Your own health, risk factors and personal circumstances
- Your individual patient’s health, risk factors and personal circumstances
- Your COVID-19 Safety plan, including the amount of personal protective equipment (PPE) in your clinic

**Accessibility**
- Ease with which your patients can contact the office
- Availability of timely appointments
- Relative availability of in-person and virtual care appointments in your clinic

**Respect & Appropriateness**
- Your patient’s physical, mental or cognitive impairments
- Your patient’s and family/caregiver’s ability/experience using technology
- Your patient’s preferences regarding virtual care and/or in-person care

**Effectiveness**
- How much an in-person visit will improve your patient’s health outcomes
- How much an in-person visit might prevent missed or delayed diagnosis
- If your patient’s primary care needs can or cannot be deferred

**Efficiency**
- Frequency of in-person and virtual visits
- Capacity to address multiple issues in a single in-person visit
- Decreased face-to-face time by assessing patient concerns virtually prior to in-person care

**Equity**
- Your patient’s access, ability and comfort to use virtual care technology
- Your patient’s social and cultural barriers to care
- Your patient’s personal and economic barriers to in-person visits (childcare, work, transportation)

*Based on the work of Dr. Tara Kiran, a Toronto family physician and the Fidani Chair of Improvement and Innovation at the University of Toronto: [Ramping up in-person office visits in primary care in the aftermath of COVID-19.](#)