

Quality & Accreditation Institute

Centre for Accreditation of Health & Social Care



Certification Standards for Telehealth Platforms

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I Introduction

Quality is an important pillar to achieve the agenda of 'Universal Health Coverage' (UHC) and therefore, it is important that governments and stakeholders work together to promote access to quality and safe care. One of the most important components of UHC is access to care. In many instances, it is very difficult to provide access to in-person healthcare due to huge geographical area and limited resources. Also, reaching to rural areas is a challenge and therefore using technology, we can reach out to such patients to not only providing healthcare but also be cost effective for both seeker and provider. Further, there may not be a need of in-person care e.g. for follow up, regular check-ups or continuous monitoring. Disasters both manmade and natural including disease outbreaks poses a serious challenge to entire health system. Pandemic situation like COVID-19 has forced people to lockdown themselves in their homes and closure of healthcare facilities to carry out routine out-patient services and in-patient procedures. This has resulted into a major public health crisis and people requiring health care other than treatment for COVID-19 were exposed to high risk. Therefore, it becomes essential to explore alternate approaches to provide access to health care to needy patients. Telehealth is one such option to explore and utilise. It is therefore become important to have a suitable telehealth platform to deliver appropriate telehealth services.

These certification standards for telehealth platform to deliver telehealth services are developed to support both telehealth platforms and their users. These set of standards if implemented would certainly show benefits like delivering high quality telehealth services, compliance to regulatory requirements, and use of best practices.

These standards are meant to certify telehealth platform for providing telehealth services both as a standalone telehealth service provider or as a part of a hospital.

These standards are comprised of **4 chapters, 14 standards and 48 criteria**. Criterion is the measurable component of the standard.

We are hopeful that such telehealth platform developers would find these useful and we seek your feedback on continuous basis to improve them as part of our regular review and revision process.

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III Standards Framework

This set of certification standards have a defined framework making them easy for telehealth platform, facilities and assessors to use. These standards are categorised into 4 Chapters as mentioned above. Each Chapter is divided into a number of Standards and each Standard is further divided into a number of criteria. Criterion is a measurable element to evaluate the compliance against that specific standard. The framework is as follows:

Sl. No.	Name of Chapter	No. of Standards	No. of Criteria
1	Information Management System (IMS)	6	23
2	Patient Assessment and Care (PAC)	4	9
3	Medication Prescription and Safety (MPS)	1	3
4	Digital Health Application (DHA)	3	13
	Total	14	48

Illustration of how the standard is structured:

Chapter is referred as acronym e.g. Information Management System is referred as IMS. Standards are numbered as IMS.1, IMS.2 etc. and criteria are numbered as IMS.1.a, IMS .1.b etc.

Standard framework can be depicted as follows:

Chapter
 Standard
 Criterion

Chapter 1. Information Management System (IMS)

Standard IMS.1: Documented policy and procedure exist to meet the information needs of the telehealth service provider.

Criteria IMS.1. a The information needs of the telehealth service provider are identified and are appropriate to the scope of the services being provided.

Criteria IMS.1 b

Scoring methodology:

Each criterion is scored at a scale of 10/0/NA based on the compliance as per below principle:

- Compliance to the requirement: 10
- Non-compliance to the requirement: 0
- Not Applicable: NA (There may be a possibility that some of the standard/criterion is not relevant to a specific type of platform based on its design, in such case that standard/criterion shall be rated as NA)

Evaluation Criteria for certification decision:

A telehealth platform must meet the following criteria for the award of certification. In addition, evidence of modification in the platform to comply with the requirement to be submitted for addressing criterion having received a score of 0.

- The average score for individual standard must be 10.
- The average score for individual chapter must be 10.
- The overall average score for all chapters must be 10.

Chapter 1 Information Management System (IMS)

Introduction

An effective Information management system is based on the information needs of the telehealth platform. The information system should be able to capture, transmit, store, analyse, utilise and retrieve information “as and when” required for improving the clinical outcomes as well as individual and overall telehealth platform performance. It is therefore important that the telehealth platform has a robust information management system.

STANDARDS AND CRITERIA		
Standard	IMS.1:	Telehealth platform is designed to meet the information needs of the telehealth service provider.
Criterion	a.	The information needs of the telehealth service provider are identified and are appropriate to the scope of the services being provided.
	b.	Information management is in accordance with the documented policy and procedure.
	c.	The telehealth platform may consider adopting the current release of Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR) specification for exchanging healthcare information electronically.
Standard	IMS.2:	The telehealth platform supports implementation of a robust document control system.
Criterion	a.	The telehealth platform has a process to allow development, authorisation, review and updation of documents including plans, policies, procedures and forms.
	b.	The telehealth platform supports storing and retrieving documents.
Standard	IMS.3:	The telehealth platform supports a robust system of controlling and managing data and information that is interoperable for information portability across doctors and patients.
Criterion	a.	It allows creation of formats for data and information collection in standardise format.
	b.	Necessary system is available for collection and analysis of data and information with proper audit logs and audit trail
	c.	It allows implementation for timely and accurate dissemination of data and information.
	d.	It allows for storing and retrieving of data and information, with proper access controls.
	e.	System is designed in a way which is interoperable for information portability across doctors and patients.
Standard	IMS.4:	The telehealth platform supports maintaining of medical records for all patients.
Criterion	a.	A medical record (including Electronic Health Record) contains information about reasons for seeking teleconsultation, history/ examination findings, investigation reports, past records, images, diagnosis, prescriptions and treatment plan.

	b.	The telehealth platform allows maintaining log or record of telehealth interaction (e.g. phone logs, email records, chat/ text record, video interaction logs or similar systems).
	c.	The telehealth platform ensures retaining of patient records, reports, documents, images, diagnostics, data (digital or non-digital) utilised in the telehealth consultation.
	d.	In case a prescription is shared with the patient, the telehealth platform supports maintaining of the prescription records as required for in-person consultations.
	e.	When a patient is referred to another consultant or advise to seek in-person consultation, the medical record contains the date of such referral, the reason for the referral or reason for advising in-person consultation. Allow exchange patient information with other clinicians, including those in other specialties.
Standard	IMS.5:	The telehealth platform supports management of complete and accurate medical record of every patient.
Criterion	a.	The telehealth platform allows every medical record to have a unique identifier, with proper audit logs and audit trail for any changes with date/time stamps with user identification.
	b.	The telehealth platform identifies those authorised to make entries in these records, with proper access controls.
	c.	The telehealth platform identifies person making entry in the medical record through name, signature, date and time.
	d.	The telehealth platform supports to keep a complete, up-to-date and chronological account of patient care.
	e.	The telehealth platform supports the availability of the patient’s record to the patient on request.
Standard	IMS.6:	The telehealth platform ensures maintaining confidentiality, integrity and security of records, data and information.
Criterion	a.	The telehealth platform has system for maintaining confidentiality, security and integrity of records, data and information as per the applicable laws/ regulations.
	b.	The telehealth platform ensures safeguarding of data & record against loss, destruction and tampering through documented policy for access controls and user rights for access, view and sharing of data.
	c.	A system log of all and any changes to data made post tele-consultation, with right audit trails in the system.

Chapter 2
Patient Assessment and Care (PAC)

Introduction

The telehealth platform supports patient care intended to be delivered by the telehealth service provider.

STANDARDS AND CRITERIA		
Standard	PAC.1:	The telehealth platform allows service provider to define and display its services.
Criterion	a.	The telehealth platform supports the display of the services being provided (website/ technology platform) for easy access of the user.
	b.	Information related to consultation and service package charges are made available to patients via different modes (company's site, advertisement, messages).
Standard	PAC.2:	The telehealth platform has a mechanism of identification of the consultant/ physician and the patient.
Criterion	a.	The telehealth platform has a system in place to identify the consultant/ physician providing the teleconsultation.
	b.	The telehealth platform has a system in place to identify the patient receiving the teleconsultation.
Standard	PAC.3:	The telehealth platform supports registration of the patient.
Criterion	a.	The telehealth platform generates a unique number to identify the patient throughout the telehealth platform.
	b.	The telehealth platform supports to provide a receipt/invoice to the patient for the fee charged for telehealth consultation.
Standard	PAC.4:	The telehealth platform supports assessment of the patient.
Criterion	a.	The telehealth platform provides a mechanism for a care provider to assess the patient.
	b.	The telehealth platform provides a mechanism for a care provider to use various diagnostic digital tools including but not limited to medical devices, imaging etc.
	c.	The telehealth platform provides a mechanism for a care provider to diagnose and prepare a care plan/ prescription for the patient.

Chapter 3
Medication Prescription and Safety (MPS)

Introduction

This chapter provides a frame work for safe and effective medication prescription through the telehealth platform. This includes the processes for prescribing and transcribing, if required.

STANDARDS AND CRITERIA		
Standard	MPS.1:	The telehealth platform supports for a system for prescription of medication.
Criterion	a.	The telehealth platform allows display of the registration number of the consultant/ physician.
	b.	The telehealth platform supports a medication order minimally contains patient identification, medication name, route of administration, dose, and frequency.
	c.	The telehealth platform supports that a prescription is issued in a defined format and medication orders are clear, legible, dated, named and signed.

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Chapter 4 Digital Health Applications (DHA)

Introduction

Digital health applications play an important and critical role in telehealth system. It is necessary that technology platforms comply with defined requirements based on sound principles and applicable regulations. This is essential to offer a safe and secure system, proper consent management, content & interoperability mechanism, data privacy and security, and patient safety while using medical devices.

STANDARDS AND CRITERIA		
Standard	DHA.1:	The telehealth platform has defined technology-based tools used for patient consultation.
Criterion	a.	Technology-based tools may include but not limited to telephone (mobile or landline phones), video, devices connected over Local Area Network (LAN), Wide Area Network (WAN), Internet, Chat Platforms, or Mobile App or internet based digital platforms for telehealth or data transmission systems/ email/ fax/ similar systems.
	b.	There is a process to deal with unscheduled downtime of the technology system used.
	c.	Telehealth platform is developed in a way that promotes and enables interoperability.
Standard	DHA.2:	Technology platforms used across a network of consultants/ physicians are designed in a way to support compliance with applicable guidelines.
Criterion	a.	Technology platforms (mobile apps, websites or similar systems) providing telehealth services to consumers shall be obligated to ensure that the consumers are consulting with consultants duly registered with respective councils or state councils and comply with relevant provisions.
	b.	Platform must provide the name, qualification and registration number, contact details of every consultant listed on the platform.
	c.	The telehealth platforms based on Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning are not used to counsel the patients or prescribe any medicines to a patient.
	d.	Current technologies such as Artificial Intelligence/ Machine Learning, Internet of Things, advanced data science-based decision support systems or similar systems may only be used to assist and support a consultant on patient evaluation, diagnosis or management.
	e.	Digital health application may have artificial intelligence or logic built in to check for allergies, non-prescription of prohibited drug.
Standard	DHA.3:	The telehealth platform aspires to operate within the framework of

	National Digital Health Policy.	
Criterion	a.	The telehealth platform defines the standards required for ensuring interoperability within the applicable National Digital Health Eco-system.
	b.	The telehealth platform defines and uses standards for consent management.
	c.	The telehealth platform defines and uses standards for exchange of healthcare data (content and interoperability).
	d.	The telehealth platform defines and uses standards related to data privacy (through access control) and security.
	e.	The telehealth platform defines and uses standards related to ensuring patient safety while collecting data and quality of data captured.

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