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January Newsletter

Welcome to the monthly newsletter of **A/Z Health & Elder Law** where we share tips and information on relevant topics focused on estate planning, elder law services, and life care planning.

We invite you to [contact](#) our office at (630) 510-3213 for additional information or to schedule a consultation for assistance with your planning needs.

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Presenting Guest Speaker:
Kathy Smith, MSW, LSW Executive Director,
Lighthouse Hospice and Palliative Care

Our Gift to You in the New Year-Self Care Tips!

Virtual Educational Event

New Year, new goals! While the concept of self-care isn't new, it has grown more popular in recent months. Self-care isn't selfish. In reality it's the complete opposite, it's a necessity in the midst of busyness. Self-care practices are not acts of learning to be more selfish, but rather, acts of learning more about yourself and taking the time necessary to improve your mood and circumstance.

Help protect yourself from burnout by ringing in another year with these tips!

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The Changing Face of Telemedicine



Telemedicine is the digital information distribution of healthcare-related services. Not long-ago telemedicine was an innovative practice, primarily a supplement to hospitals' information strategy, managing patient care and their data more efficiently. During the coronavirus pandemic and its associated urgent healthcare needs, hospitals and medical offices are making telehealth capabilities more available than ever before. Long-distance patient and clinician

Increasing Shift to Virtual Medical Care

The push for comprehensive virtual medical care quickly without a standardized platform has left many healthcare facilities struggling to meet demand with technological data integrity and consistent user interface. Just as an individual's panic led to purchasing toilet paper, hand sanitizer, and other essential household items creating shortages, hospitals "pandemic-purchased" telehealth solutions to ride out the crisis led to a hodgepodge of tech solutions. This situation led to medical information security breaches, dropped calls and video conferencing, poor audio and video quality, and distorted or incorrect information relayed to patients and health insurance companies alike.

Patients who were sheltering in place and rather fearful at the outset of the pandemic were initially forgiving of technological glitches. Today, however, patients have higher expectations of telemedicine and seek seamless experiences. Patients are also taking advantage of the ability to test-drive options from home, exploring physician expertise, availability, disposition, and price point before committing to a particular doctor, health care practitioner, or hospital facility. Additionally, patients are enjoying the experience and are now more likely to seek virtual care. It turns out that a patient using telehealth is more likely to adhere to prescription and wellness regimes, which is an advantage to the public health overall. On average, telemedicine saves a patient more than 90 minutes otherwise wasted in commuting to an appointment and waiting to be seen by a doctor.

Telemedicine Being Embraced by Clinics and Hospitals

Clinics and hospitals are also embracing the benefits of telemedicine. Virtual medicine has played a vital role in quickly flattening the curve by getting to as many patients as possible without compromising social distancing and urgent care only protocols. Patients with chronic conditions and other non-urgent care, including routine follow-ups, can still engage with their physicians, allowing medical care, decreased patient anxiety, and maintaining facility reputation through patient retention. This continuity of care is essential, especially for urgent non-COVID-19 related health issues.

Healthcare facilities and medical professionals are now able to reach a new demographic of patients through telemedicine, particularly those in rural areas or those who list time, convenience, and proximity as barriers to making an

future, even after the pandemic ends.

Telemedicine Saves Time and Money

Telemedicine also yields significant savings of time and money for healthcare organizations and patients. An average in-office visit is 121 minutes, including 101 minutes of commute and waiting time. Therefore, a patient is only experiencing about 20 minutes of interaction with their doctor. A full one-third of patients have left a doctor's office because the wait was too long. Telemedicine reduces wait times, no-shows, and cancellations, saving time and money. There are also flexible insurance benefits to take advantage of when using telehealth.

What Telemedicine Platforms and Service are Right for You?

How can you best assess your hospital or doctor's office telemedicine platform and service? Medicaeconomics.com cites four questions that you must ask to find the service best suited to your needs. Telemedicine can vary drastically among categories such as compliance, quality, convenience, and features, so keep the following in mind as you search for the right fit.

1. Look for easy to use technology. As a patient, you should have no trouble downloading and accessing a telehealth app. It should be easy to use and intuitive and be available on multiple digital devices such as a tablet, phone, or laptop.
2. Is the software providing HIPPA compliant and secure? Privacy issues are a major concern when using non-healthcare specific solutions like Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, and others. Ensure your telehealth provider keeps your sensitive information digitally safe.
3. Make sure that the platform provides quality audio and video transmission. You will feel more comfortable, and your session will yield the best results knowing that communication is clear. Miscommunication can lead to misdiagnosis and have tragic health consequences.
4. Shop around before committing. Read online reviews and speak to others about their telehealth experiences. Finding reputable healthcare facilities doesn't stop with a board-certified physician. Facility reputation can be the difference between ease of interaction, diagnosis, and follow-up regarding insurance.

Embracing telemedicine can open your healthcare to expert physicians, save you time, and maintain the significant benefit of social distancing. Look for a healthcare organization with the right telemedicine framework for you. It will

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