

**Academy of Medical Royal Colleges Statement:
Adapting medical regulation for the telemedicine era**

Telemedicine is growing and offers many opportunities for UK healthcare delivery. However, British patients remain unprotected by current UK medical regulation that does not include all telemedicine practitioners who may interpret their imaging investigations (Teleradiology), e-prescribe for them (Teleprescribing), investigate tissue samples and biopsies (Telepathology) or e-monitor them (Telemonitoring).

Telemedicine should be regulated like all other forms of medicine and should meet the same safety standards.

The Care Quality Commission should require all providers of medical services to ensure that they can verify the qualifications and registration status of every doctor providing medical services to UK patients, wherever that doctor is located. This should include an individual assessment of their revalidation requirements. Healthcare providers should not rely on contractual arrangements between telemedicine companies and their employees, nor on indemnity provided by these companies, to guarantee the quality of patient care.

Patients should be made aware if part of their care is devolved to a doctor working outside the UK. However, the UK-based healthcare provider who commissions a telemedicine-based service must remain legally liable for any damage that may arise as a result of poor medical care, whether delivered conventionally or by telemedicine. The UK-based healthcare provider must not be allowed to devolve this responsibility to a telemedicine provider.

All doctors providing medical services to patients in the UK, whether locally or by telemedicine, should be required by healthcare providers to register with the General Medical Council. Ultimately this should be a legal requirement.

26 July 2010