



Adapting to Virtual Group Medical Visits

The following considerations for adapting to virtual GMVs are derived from the early experiences of PHC teams offering virtual GMVs. We will continue to learn and adapt over time.

Planning Considerations

- **More time:** We have heard that the initial virtual GMVs take longer to plan and run than expected when a team is first starting. Start your planning early, and be sure to leave extra time for each component during the session.
- **Smaller Groups:** To enable optimal group interaction, the ideal number of participants for virtual GMVs is smaller. Some teams have suggested no more than 6-8 participants is ideal.
- **Higher No Shows:** Expect a higher no show rate; overbook and use reminder calls.

Appointment Set-Up (Zoom for Healthcare)

- Set the date and time of GMV well in advance and block that time in all participating providers calendars early, including prep and debrief time before and after the GMV appointment.
- The host of the GMV creates a Zoom meeting appointment following Nova Scotia Health [Instructions for Group Patient Education](#).
- Include the Zoom link in the Outlook calendar appointment to participating team members.
- Clerical staff may need to create a group session in the clinic scheduling system (e.g. EMR, Meditech, CWS), and send out any forms to patients as necessary (e.g. lab requisition).
- Email the Zoom link and other necessary information and attachments to patients using the [Template Email – Group Patient Education](#) to get started.
 - Tip 1: Use a generic clinic email account instead of a staff or provider's email account.
 - Tip 2: Instead of sending each patient an individual email, you may choose to send as a group email but you must **add patient emails in the BCC field** to ensure their email addresses remain confidential.

Supporting the Technology Learning Curve

For your patients:

- Include links to the [Patient Information Guide](#) and the [NSH Virtual Care website](#) in the invitation email.
- If resources allow, consider dedicating a team member as a technology assistant. Offer practice sessions for your patients prior to the GMV, and share their phone number to help people having technical difficulties while the visit is taking place.
- Include an icebreaker activity that gets participants practicing with the videoconference features you will be using during the GMV (e.g. chat box, thumbs up, whiteboard, annotation, polling, audio and video).

For you and your team:

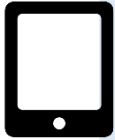
- All staff/providers involved need to be familiar with and comfortable using the videoconference technology (e.g. Zoom for Healthcare). Take time to use the features and practice using dry runs.
- Start where you are: Offer your first virtual GMV with basic features such as chat and add more advanced features such as annotation and polls as you build comfort and confidence over time.
- It is strongly recommended to designate an experienced tech moderator to be in charge of administering the technological aspects of the visit.

Check out the [Nova Scotia Health Zoom for Healthcare](#) page for information, resources and training for healthcare providers and Nova Scotia Health staff.



Process Changes: What's Different?

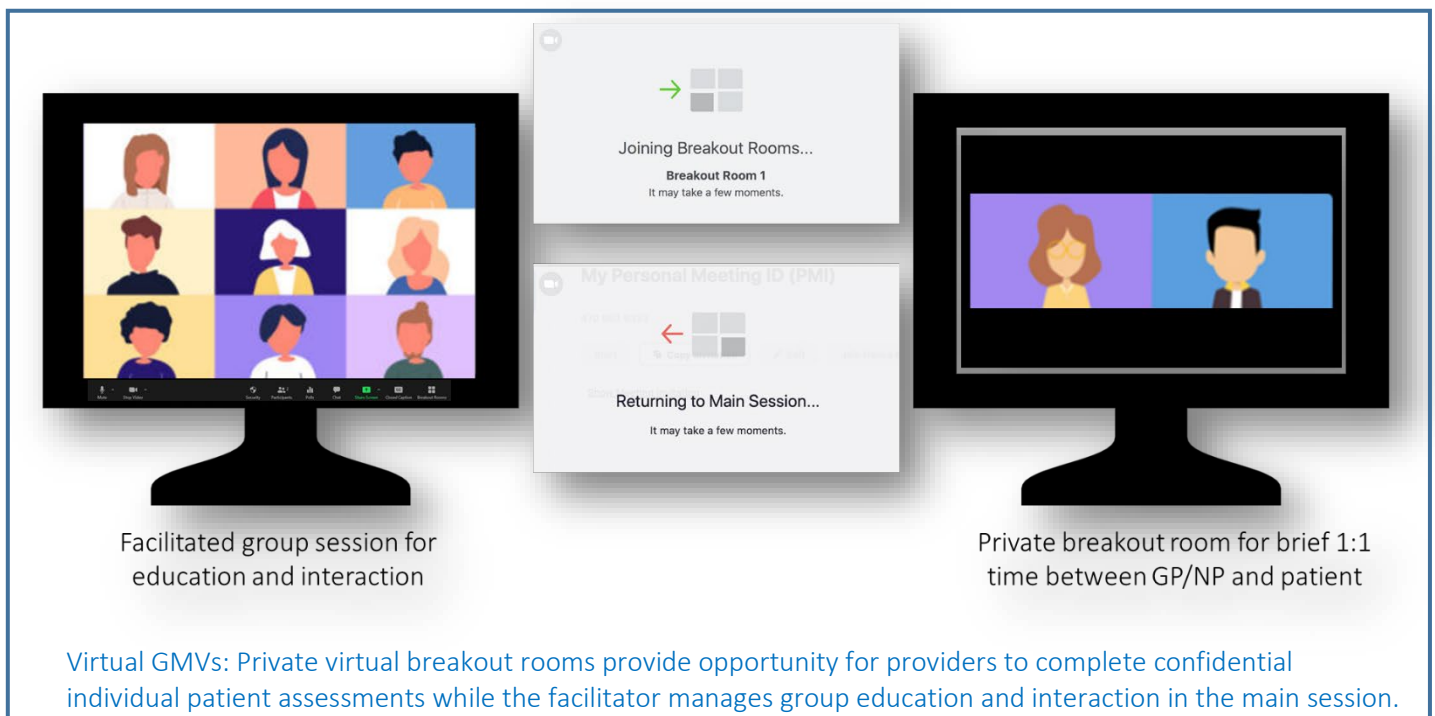
- **Inviting Appropriate Patients:** Ask patients about access to reliable internet and appropriate device*, interest in using Zoom for Healthcare, and a private location to access care.
- **Interacting with Physical Patient Charts:** If applicable, have an on-site provider to coordinate with off-site provider to ensure proper communication and charting.
- **Reviewing Group Confidentiality:** In addition to general group confidentiality guidelines, review the [Introduction Slide](#) that outlines privacy and confidentiality specific to virtual group sessions. Each participant provides an electronic “thumbs up” to confirm acceptance, which is then documented in the patients chart.
- **Obtaining Prescription Lists:** Request fax from pharmacy or review Drug Information System (DIS) prior to GMV.
- **Communicating Lab Results:** Review with each patient in advance via phone or secure email, or via virtual breakout room.



***iPad Borrowing Program:** Primary Health Care is currently leading a new initiative aimed at decreasing barriers to virtual care participation by making iPads available for patients to engage with health or wellness services and primary care providers. A limited supply of iPads are available at select sites throughout Nova Scotia for patients to borrow for free for a limited time. Learn more at PHCQuality.ca, and/or connect with a Primary Health Care leader to consider if this program could help your patients access care virtually.

Tips and Tricks

- **Tech Tips Slide:** Share a slide that highlights the ways to get the best virtual experience with regards to using chat and voice functions, e.g. show how to mute and unmute, turn camera on and off, etc.
- **Handouts:** Organize any handouts or visuals you may want to show in a folder to find and share them efficiently. Email these to patients after the visit.
- **Annotation:** When sharing content on your screen, use the Spotlight or Arrow annotation tools in Zoom for Healthcare to help participants focus their eye on what you are speaking about. (Learn more about Zoom annotation tools [here](#)).



Facilitated group session for education and interaction

Private breakout room for brief 1:1 time between GP/NP and patient

Virtual GMVs: Private virtual breakout rooms provide opportunity for providers to complete confidential individual patient assessments while the facilitator manages group education and interaction in the main session.