



TELEHEALTH AND ENDOCRINOLOGY: EXPAND ACCESS TO TELEHEALTH

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESULTED IN A MAJOR INCREASE IN PATIENTS ACCESSING MEDICAL SERVICES VIA TELEHEALTH. FOR EXAMPLE, **MORE THAN 1 IN 4 MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES HAD A TELEHEALTH VISIT BETWEEN THE SUMMER OF AND FALL OF 2020.** THE ENDOCRINE SOCIETY URGES CONGRESS TO EXPAND ACCESS TO TELEHEALTH SERVICES.

TELEHEALTH PROVIDES SAFE ACCESS TO CARE FOR PEOPLE WITH CHRONIC CONDITIONS:

The Endocrine Society represents more than 18,000 physicians and scientists who work to treat and research endocrine disorders, including diabetes, cancer, and obesity. Our members provide care to vulnerable patients with complex chronic conditions many of whom are at high risk should they contract COVID-19. Expanding access to telehealth services ensures that people with chronic conditions can safely receive the care they need without increased risk to COVID-19.

TELEHEALTH ENSURES GREATER ACCESS FOR UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS AND OLDER AMERICANS:

Expanded access to telehealth services will ensure that underserved populations receive the care they need. For example, [a recent GAO report](#) found that the proportion of Medicare beneficiaries utilizing telehealth was similar across racial and ethnic groups. Increasing telehealth access is also beneficial for patients in rural areas who may have to travel long distances to get necessary care. Telehealth also ensures access to care for older Americans who also lack transportation options. Telehealth use amongst older Americans skyrocketed during the pandemic. We ask Congress to preserve telehealth access for underserved populations and older Americans after the public health emergency ends.

TELEHEALTH PRIORITIES:

The Endocrine Society requests your support of these efforts which will ensure increased access to telehealth services:

AUDIO-ONLY SERVICES:

CMS currently allows for coverage and payment of telephone-based (audio-only) services during the public health emergency. Coverage of audio-only services ensures increased access for patients who do not have the necessary technology needed to access virtual care. Coverage of audio-only addresses health inequities by providing greater access to underserved populations, particularly in rural areas where patients lack reliable broadband access. **We urge Congress to pass legislation directing CMS to make coverage and payment of audio-only services permanent.**

ELIMINATING THE ORIGINATING SITE REQUIREMENT GEOGRAPHIC RESTRICTIONS:

During the public health emergency, CMS relaxed the originating site requirement allowing patients and providers to deliver and receive telehealth services from their homes. Relaxing this requirement has reduced the burden on patients with limited access to transportation, increased compliance with managing physician monitoring, and provided relief to those balancing work or caregiving responsibilities with receiving necessary medical care. **We ask Congress to permanently relax the originating site requirement and geographic restrictions ensuring patients can receive telehealth from home.**