

May 1, 2020

Senator Joe Manchin
United States Senate

Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senate

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senate

Jerry Moran
United States Senate

Dear Senators Manchin, Hyde-Smith, Shaheen, and Moran,

On behalf of the Endocrine Society, I would like to thank you for your support for increased payments for audio-only telephone calls during the COVID-19 public health epidemic (PHE). The Endocrine Society is the world's largest professional organization of endocrinologists, representing the interests of over 18,000 physicians and scientists engaged in the treatment and research of endocrine disorders, including diabetes, cancer, obesity, osteoporosis, thyroid disease, and infertility. Our members continue to provide care to vulnerable patients with these complex, chronic conditions that place them at higher risk during this public health emergency.

As a medical specialty that treats a high number of Medicare patients, payment parity for telephone-only visits is extremely important to ensuring the solvency of our medical practices. This patient population often does not have the technology needed for video telehealth visits or is uncomfortable using it. The care that we provide these patients through an audio-only telephone call is equal in time and intensity to a video telehealth visit or office visit, and payments should reflect that.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released a new set of Medicare waivers yesterday which included a provision related to payment for telephone-only calls. CMS previously announced that Medicare would pay for certain services conducted by audio-only telephone between beneficiaries and their doctors and other clinicians. Now, CMS is increasing payments for these telephone visits to match payments for similar office and outpatient visits.



This has been a top advocacy priority for the Society's members during the PHE and we are pleased that CMS heard your concerns and the concerns of our members. Thank you again for your work on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary D. Hammer".

Gary D. Hammer, MD, PhD
President
Endocrine Society