

Private Practice Physical Therapists

Small business professionals restoring function to America - one patient at a time.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Private Practice Section (PPS) of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) urges Congress to pass legislation allowing clinicians to promote cost savings and quality care in Medicare through the use of telehealth and remote patient monitoring.

Telehealth is the use of interactive 2-way telecommunication (with real-time audio and video) to provide health care, health information, or health education from a distance. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has concluded that telehealth provides the opportunity to care for a broad range of populations, including those enrolled in Medicare. Patients as well as payers are seeking more time-efficient and less costly care models. In rural and underserved communities, using telehealth can reduce disparities in care as well as provide high-quality care without increasing costs.

While the use of telehealth does not eliminate the need for in-person visits, it does increase access to a greater variety of providers and can enhance delivery and coordination of care. By providing assessments, care, and interventions via telehealth, physical therapists could prevent falls, reduce functional decline, avoid costly emergency room visits, and reduce hospital admissions as well as readmissions. Upcoming legislation seeks to expand the use of telehealth and remote patient monitoring services in Medicare in pursuit of cost savings and improving the quality of care.

Studies have shown that physical therapist use of telehealth for telerehabilitation can result in cost-savings, improved outcomes, increased access, and higher patient satisfaction:

- Virtual rehabilitation in total knee replacement enables on-demand rehabilitation, allows for care coordination and may improve adherence and patient satisfaction. Additionally, patients who received rehabilitation via real-time video after knee replacement reported similar clinical outcomes and satisfaction compared with patients who received traditional care;
- The Rural Veterans TeleRehabilitation Initiative found that home-based telerehabilitation significantly improved functional independence, cognition, and patient satisfaction; and
- Virtual reality-based telerehabilitation interventions were found to be lower cost and just as effective and as in-person rehab at helping patients recover balance skills after stroke.

The Private Practice Section of the American Physical Therapy Association supports legislation that would:

- Allow Medicare enrolled providers or suppliers to be reimbursed for care provided via telehealth when certain quality and cost-effectiveness criteria met. This would enable **Medicare enrolled physical therapists** to have the opportunity to provide care via telehealth;
- Lifting restrictions on the use of telehealth in Accountable Care Organizations, by those paid through global or bundled payment, and care covered by Medicare Advantage plans—**enabling participation by physical therapists** and others;
- Allowing additional licensed health care professionals including **physical therapists to furnish telehealth services** through the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) initiatives;
- Creating a Medicare Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM) benefit for certain high-risk, high-cost patients; and
- Authorizing a study on the use of telehealth services once restrictions have been lifted.

PPS believes that providing access to therapy using telehealth will improve outcomes and save costs. Legislation is needed to achieve this policy change.