

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 **CONNECT for Health Act of 2019 (H.R.4932/S.2741)** to expand access, promote cost savings, and ensure 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 (CMS) 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 also reduce disparities in care.

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 both the delivery and coordination 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. 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.

The CONNECT for Health Act seeks to lift current restrictions while reducing the financial burden on Medicare by:

- Allowing 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 provide care via telehealth;
- Requiring HHS to review and improve the process for adding telehealth services to those which are covered by Medicare. This could enable **physical therapists to furnish telehealth services to Medicare beneficiaries**;
- Authorizing CMS' Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) model to **allow additional health professionals, including physical therapists, to furnish telehealth services**; Requiring CMMI to analyze impact of telehealth waivers on quality and spending; and
- Clarifying that providing Medicare beneficiaries healthcare technology that is to be used for the purposes of furnishing telehealth is not considered "renewal" for the purposes of fraud and abuse laws.

PPS believes that providing access to therapy using telehealth will improve outcomes and save costs. Legislation is needed to achieve this policy change. To cosponsor **S.2741**, please contact Meghan O'Toole in Senator Schatz's office (Meghan_O'Toole@schatz.senate.gov). Please contact Crozer Connor (Crozer.Connor@mail.house.gov) in Representative Mike Thompson's office to cosponsor **H.R.4932**.