



2021 IN REVIEW

Telehealth Impact Report

AMA's advocacy continues to make it easier for physicians to expand care to their patients via telehealth and receive fair compensation for their services.

Expanding access, coverage, and payment:

- Telehealth availability to Medicare patients nationwide, wherever they are located including in their homes.
- Vital services added to Medicare telehealth list, and many covered at least through end of 2023.
- Telehealth payment rates increased to in-person visit rates.
- Telehealth covered for new and established patients.
- Remote monitoring covered for acute and chronic conditions.
- CPT codes for audio-only visits approved for coverage throughout COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, with payment rates equivalent to established patient visits.
- Several private payers followed Medicare's guidance to ensure access to care for patients.
- Continued advocacy for telehealth services to be covered beyond the public health emergency.
- Permanently expanded CMS definition of equipment that can be used for telehealth to include smart phones that are capable of two-way real-time interactive communication.
- Launched the [Return on Health campaign](#) through the Physician Grassroots Network to collect case studies for how physicians and practices are measuring the value of telehealth in their environments.

AMA provided Congress policy recommendations and guidance to permanently lift geographic and site restrictions on Medicare covered telehealth services and repeal Congressionally imposed in person requirement on Medicare telemental health services:

- Endorsed and actively campaigning for congressional action on:
 - H.R. 1332/S. 368 - the "Telehealth Modernization Act of 2021," which would lift the rural-only restriction and add any site where a patient is located as a potential originating site.
 - H.R. 2903/S. 1512 - the "CONNECT for Health Act," which would lift the rural-only restriction, add the home as an originating site, establish a process for the HHS Secretary to add originating sites, and provide HHS with the permanent authority to waive section 1834(m) restrictions.
- Endorsed and campaigning for congressional action on H.R. 4058/S. 2061, the "Telemental Health Care Access Act," which would repeal the new congressional imposed in-person requirement on Medicare telemental health services.
- Successfully advocated for modifications to proposed requirement for in-person visits within months of subsequent telemental health services, lessening the frequency to every 12 months instead of every 6 months.
- Ongoing advocacy to oppose imposition of new statutory barriers to accessing Medicare covered telehealth services, such as in-person requirements, as part of legislation to lift existing access barriers to Medicare covered telehealth services.

AMA provided state-level policy recommendations and guidance to expand coverage, access and payment of high-quality telehealth:

- Updated Issue Brief: State telehealth policies to ensure access to high quality telehealth.
- Revised AMA's model state telehealth legislation to reflect new AMA policy.

- Worked with 20 state medical associations on legislation expanding coverage, payment and/or access to telehealth. Updated state laws charts summarizing key provisions in state telehealth laws to inform and identify legislative trends.
- Ongoing advocacy with leading state policy organizations, including National Governors' Association (NGA), National Conference of Insurance Legislators (NCOIL) and National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC).

Addressing chronic disease:

- Advocacy on opioid epidemic and pain treatment led DEA to offer significant telehealth and audio-only flexibilities for controlled substance prescribing and opioid use disorder treatment during public health emergency.
- Medicare Diabetes Prevention Program (MDPP) continued coverage of virtual sessions during COVID-19 and future public health emergencies.

- To support the self-measured blood pressure (SMBP) services covered by Medicare as of 1/1/2020, AMA and AHA jointly submitted a National Coverage Determination request to CMS for coverage of validated SMBP devices.
- Submitted a letter requesting recognition of AMA as a program partner for HHS Office of Women's Health Self-Measured Blood Pressure partner program.

Developing the code set for the future of medicine:

- CPT Panel adopted new codes for Remote Therapeutic Monitoring and the new Digital Medicine Taxonomy as an appendix in CPT.
- Ongoing policy collaboration and advancement of telehealth and digital medicine payment through the AMA Digital Medicine Payment Advisory Group (DMPAG).

920+

media mentions of AMA's telehealth efforts with 2.4B impressions

Virtual

speaking engagements at leading national industry such as American Telemedicine Association Conference, HIMSS, Becker's Conference, Digital Medicine Conference, and more.

Led

and contributed to discussions and critical analysis around equity in telehealth and digital innovations that has engaged thousands of people.

The AMA continues to develop the resources you need to quickly implement and optimize telehealth programs and continue care.

- The [Telehealth Quick Guide](#) is updated to provide the latest changes and best practices in telehealth policy, coverage, payment, and workflows to support physicians and practices in successfully optimizing and sustaining telehealth.
- The [AMA Digital Health Implementation Playbook series](#) provides step-by-step guidance to implement and adopt digital health solutions. This regularly updated series includes playbooks on telehealth and remote patient monitoring.
- The AMA also offers a coding scenario resource and a tool comparing Medicare telehealth coding and payment policy to private health plan policy.
- The [Telehealth Immersion Program](#) guides physicians, practices and health systems in optimizing and sustaining telehealth at their organizations. Through a series of curated webinars, interactive peer-to-peer learning sessions, virtual discussions, bootcamps and resources on-demand, the program offers a comprehensive curriculum and enhanced experience to help physicians and other health care providers navigating the world of telehealth alongside peers nationwide.
- The Telehealth Initiative (TTI) launched a second cohort in collaboration with 5 new medical associations including Massachusetts, Montana, Iowa, New York, and

Cleveland and the Physicians Foundation. Participating practices will be measuring the value of telehealth in their environments to support advocacy efforts at the local and national level.

- Expansion of the [Validated Blood Pressure Device Listing™ \(VDL\)](#) and launch of the [IHO SMBP Essentials: Student Edition module](#) on Ed Hub.
- Recipient of funding from HHS Office of Minority Health via the American Heart Association's National Hypertension Control Initiative to create training for 350+ community health centers about SMBP.
- AMA's Accelerating Change in Medical Education Consortium published its [Telehealth Clinical Education Playbook](#) as part of the AMA Digital Health Implementation Playbook Series.

- The AMA provides physician-focused CME with practical advice on how to select and implement a telehealth service model, such as the AMA's STEPS Forward Telehealth and Telemedicine & Team-based Care [toolkit](#).
- AMA Physician Innovation Network provides virtual panel discussions that convene industry stakeholders to discuss topics such as addressing equity in telehealth and measuring the value of virtual care.
- AMA podcasts, available on ReachMD, provide updates on the latest telehealth advocacy and best practices.

AMA research spurs solutions that keep physician and patient needs at the forefront of telehealth delivery.

- Completed COVID-19 Physician Practice Financial Impact research to assess financial resources needed for practices.
- The AMA interviews physicians to combine experience with proven processes to develop practical, tested implementation resources.
- The AMA fielded a Telehealth Use Survey to explore trends in use, challenges, and opportunities for future research.
- AMA launched its [Return on Health \(ROH\) research](#) focused on assessing the value (financial, clinical

outcomes, health equity, access, patient, and physician experience) of virtual care and includes [case studies](#) on how organizations are currently measuring ROH.

- AMA co-led the COVID-19 Healthcare Coalition Physician Telehealth Impact Survey with leading organizations such as Mayo, MITRE, American Telemedicine Association, and others.
- Multiple SMBP pilots underway with health care organizations to gather learning about care teams' implementation needs and ROI of SMBP.

Fierce Healthcare

AMA adopts policies to advance telehealth, close digital divide and tackle prior authorization burdens

mHealth Intelligence

AMA Survey Charts Explosive Growth of Telehealth Services in 2020

mHealth Intelligence

AMA Launches Telehealth Immersion Program to Promote Sustainability

Forbes

Today's Virtual Care Revolution: How Policy Has Shaped And Will Continue To Shape Telehealth

For more information on AMA's ongoing telehealth efforts, visit www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/digital/telehealth-resource-center-definitions