

WASHINGTON STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: C-16
(A-20)

Subject: Ensuring Telehealth Services for Patients in
Nursing Homes and Long-term Care Facilities
in Washington State

Introduced by: Amish Dave, MD, MPH, Delegate
Erin Bauer, MD, Delegate
Mandeep Walia, MD, Delegate
King County Medical Society

Referred to: Reference Committee C

1 WHEREAS, all physicians have a responsibility to advocate for interventions that protect human
2 life and improve patient health; and

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4 WHEREAS, elderly patients and patients living in nursing homes and long-term care facilities
5 often have complex medical disease with multiple comorbidities requiring frequent and
6 intensive outpatient and inpatient medical care; and

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8 WHEREAS, these patients often have considerable difficulty attending such visits due to
9 physical handicap as well as difficulties associated with the cost and availability associated with
10 physical transport to visits; and

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12 WHEREAS, the current Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated that many nursing homes and
13 long-term care facilities will limit the ability of their residents to leave their home setting in
14 emergency situations (1); and

15
16 WHEREAS, when patients cannot see their healthcare professionals and miss their in-person
17 visits, they are at risk of adverse health outcomes; and

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19 WHEREAS, nursing homes and long-term care facilities have a responsibility to ensure that
20 their residents' health is not adversely affected due to delay or inability to visit their healthcare
21 professionals; and

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23 WHEREAS, telemedicine has allowed many routine and complex clinic visits to occur in a
24 virtual setting (2,3); and

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26 WHEREAS, there is an urgency to expand the use of technology to help people who need routine
27 care, and keep vulnerable patients and patients with mild symptoms in their homes while
28 maintaining access to the care they need (3,4); and

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30 WHEREAS, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, for at least the duration of the
31 public health emergency, has waived most barriers to provide telehealth for patients in nursing
32 home settings including removing a requirement that only rural nursing home residents be
33 eligible for telehealth (5); and

34
35 WHEREAS, the Washington State Medical Association urges the inclusion of physicians,
36 preferably experienced in nursing home care, on nursing home survey teams. (Res 21, C-91)
37 (Reaffirmed A-17) (6); and

1 WHEREAS, the Washington State Medical Association supports Medicare reimbursement
2 revisions to provide adequate reimbursement to cover on-site and off-site management services
3 for beneficiaries in the nursing home setting (Res 20, D-91) (Reaffirmed A-17) (7); and
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5 WHEREAS, the Washington State Medical Association is committed to educating the public to
6 better understand the cost of quality health care, nursing home costs, and to change existing
7 attitudes regarding long term care, by encouraging such options as home care, chore services,
8 and the Community Options Program Entry System (COPEs), to give the elderly assisted living
9 in a less regimented, institutionalized environment (Reaffirmed A-17) (8); and
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11 WHEREAS, the Washington State Medical Association has affirmed its support for an adequate
12 supply and distribution of primary care physicians. This should be accomplished by increasing
13 funding to primary care training and assistance programs and by removing financial
14 disincentives to primary care (Reaffirmed A-17) (9); and
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16 WHEREAS, in 2020, the Washington State Legislature passed Senate Bill 5385, a measure that
17 requires payment for services delivered via telemedicine to be on par with the rate paid for in-
18 person visits, which will ensure payment parity; and
19

20 WHEREAS, the newly-proposed congressional Reducing Unnecessary Senior Hospitalization
21 Act or "RUSH" Act may facilitate greater use of telehealth in skilled nursing facilities (10);
22 THEREFORE BE IT
23

24 RESOLVED, that the Washington State Medical Association advocate for measures enhancing
25 access to telemedicine technology in nursing homes and long-term care facilities including: (1)
26 supporting all nursing homes and long-term care facilities with 10 or more residents to provide
27 access to technology that will facilitate their residents having televisits with their healthcare
28 professionals; (2) ensuring that patients have a quiet and privacy-secure location to engage in
29 televisits; and (3) allow access to a care attendant to be present (if desired by the patient) for
30 patients with physical handicaps who require attendant support for their televisit. (New HOD
31 Policy)

Fiscal Note: None

HOUSE ACTION: ADOPTED _____ ADOPTED AS AMENDED _____
 FILED _____ REFERRED _____ NOT ADOPTED _____

References

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