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Considerations for Policymakers to Improve Healthcare through Telegenetics: A Points to Consider Statement of the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG)

BETHESDA, MD – August 30, 2022 | Telemedicine has skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic, but what actions are needed for more patients to have equitable, fair access to genetics services via telegenetics? To address this urgent problem, the Advocacy and Government Affairs Committee of the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG) has just released a new Points to Consider statement that will assist policymakers tasked with improving appropriate, broad access to genetics services via telehealth: “[Considerations for Policymakers to Improve Healthcare through Telegenetics: A Points to Consider Statement of the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics.](#)”

“We have seen a dramatic increase in telemedicine use during the COVID-19 pandemic, but research suggests access is not equitable across different population groups,” said lead author Heather E. Williams, PhD, MS. “Policy efforts to ensure equitable access to genetics services via telehealth are necessary. We can continue to address disparities by eliminating barriers to accessing the medical genetics workforce.”

The statement, the first published by ACMG’s Advocacy and Government Affairs (AGA) Committee, is intended to be used by policymakers to consider as they pursue legislative, regulatory, or other policies related to telegenetics or reducing disparities in access to genetic services. It describes telegenetics services, the need for these services, existing barriers to technology access, actions needed to ensure equitable access and the current state of reimbursement for these services.

A few of the specific points to consider include:

- States should pursue licensure compacts and reciprocity agreements to allow greater flexibility for patients to continue to see their specialists regardless of which state they are located in.
- Geographic and originating site restrictions create unnecessary barriers that contribute to inequities in access to genetic services. State and federal policies should address as many geographic barriers as possible to reduce disparities and ensure equitable healthcare professional access to all patients.
- Patients’ access to high-speed internet, either through ownership or through public services (e.g., local library, public health service), continues to limit the widespread deployment of telegenetics services. Policies are needed to ensure access to reliable high-speed internet such as through the availability of free and low-cost high-speed internet plans.

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- Coverage parity is necessary to ensure that healthcare professionals and clinics can continue to offer telegenetics services to patients.
- Policies designed to reduce the potential for fraud should not limit patient access to genetic testing services including those delivered by telehealth.

The statement concludes that while the COVID-19 pandemic expedited the expanded integration of telemedicine into genetic services, only a concerted effort will ensure that all Americans can benefit from these services. The points discussed in this statement should be viewed as considerations for federal, state and institutional policymakers as well as payers that are tasked with ensuring equitable access to telemedicine, including telegenetics. Improved telehealth policies are necessary to enhance patient care and reduce disparities in accessing genetics healthcare to patients throughout the United States.

About the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics

Founded in 1991, the American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics (ACMG) is a prominent authority in the field of medical genetics and genomics and the only nationally recognized medical professional organization solely dedicated to improving health through the practice of medical genetics and genomics. The only medical specialty society in the US that represents the full spectrum of medical genetics disciplines in a single organization, the ACMG provides education, resources and a voice for more than 2,500 clinical and laboratory geneticists, genetic counselors and other healthcare professionals. ACMG's mission is to improve health through the clinical and laboratory practice of medical genetics as well as through advocacy, education and clinical research, and to guide the safe and effective integration of genetics and genomics into all of medicine and healthcare, resulting in improved personal and public health. *Genetics in Medicine* is the official ACMG journal. ACMG's website, www.acmg.net, offers resources including policy statements, practice guidelines, and educational programs. [The ACMG Foundation for Genetic and Genomic Medicine](#) works to power ACMG educational and public health programs through charitable gifts from corporations, foundations and individuals.

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