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Abstract

The current definition of Telehealth by CMS is, “Telehealth, sometimes referred to as telemedicine, is the use of electronic information and telecommunications technologies to extend care when you and the patient aren’t in the same place at the same time. Technologies for telehealth include videoconferencing, store-and-forward imaging, streaming media, and terrestrial and wireless communications” (CMS, 2021). There has always been a hope that telehealth will bridge care between providers and patients. Since 1999, Medicare has been providing reimbursement for telehealth services. Medicare has a history of covering services primarily for rural patients. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a shutdown of medical services throughout the world. As a result Medicare’s fee schedule was disrupted in 2020 to broaden care to more patients.. The pandemic led Medicare to update the fee schedule to include more services and remove patient restrictions. A primary restriction that was lifted is rural living. Other changes include broader locality coverage, reimbursement rates, number of services, number of providers providing telehealth, and reduction in provider requirements due to the pandemic. The objective of this research is to analyze the policy changes for telehealth and how they have impacted care for the Medicare population. Due to the policy changes, there is an increase in accessibility in Medicare beneficiaries for telehealth, an increase in utilization, and overall positive health outcomes for patients.

Bio Taylor Gonzales just completed her Master’s program at Grand Valley State University’s Health Administration program. Taylor previously attended Michigan State University where she got her Bachelor’s of Science in Kinesiology. She is currently a Sales Retention Coordinator at Priority Health with two years of experience in the health insurance industry. She currently works with over 140 large groups of employers in the commercial market. Prior to Priority Health, Taylor worked at Spectrum Health working in their telehealth department at the Visiting Nurse Association.

Career Interests Taylor’s career interests lie within the innovation space. She hopes to work in product or project management within the telehealth field. Her aspiration is to make healthcare more accessible through innovations such as telehealth.