

March 18, 2020

Seema Verma
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20201

RE: Telehealth Coverage During Coronavirus Crisis

Dear Administrator Verma:

I write on behalf of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology (AAAAI) to express support for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) decision to broaden access to Medicare telehealth services during the COVID-19 crisis. We appreciate your March 17 announcement which included coverage of telehealth services under Medicare. We also appreciate your statement that you are continuing to work with private payers to ensure similar policies. As you continue to have those conversations with private payers, we would like to be a resource to you.

Established in 1943, the AAAAI is a professional organization with more than 7,000 members in the United States, Canada and 72 other countries. This membership includes board certified allergist/immunologists, other medical specialists, allied health and related health care professionals – all with a special interest in the research and treatment of patients with allergic and immunological diseases.

AAAAI's members treat a variety of patients that are at a disproportionately higher risk for serious and potentially life-threatening complications related to COVID-19, including those with compromised immune systems and asthma. As the administration continues to stress the need for social distancing over the coming weeks, and expands Medicare coverage for telehealth services, we believe that patients who receive their health insurance from the private market deserve continued care through covered telehealth services as well.

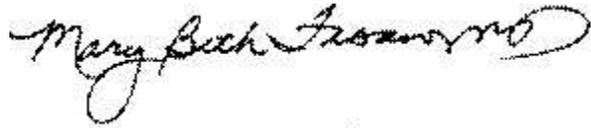
Moreover, as spring arrives, AAAAI's members are uniquely qualified to diagnose and treat seasonal allergies. During this crisis, the ability for our members to utilize telehealth services to differentiate the symptoms of COVID-19 from seasonal allergies can serve as a critical tool in both keeping patients from necessary but potentially dangerous visits to their doctor, and relieve the bandwidth issues expected at physician offices, urgent care centers, and emergency rooms across the country as the virus continues to spread.

Given the fluid circumstances and the concerns outlined above, AAAAI stands ready to support CMS in the development of more comprehensive blanket waivers related to telehealth services and to encourage private payers to follow Medicare's lead. Thank you for your leadership in protecting patients during this unique and difficult crisis.

(more)

The AAAAI looks forward to working with you and your staff as issues related to allergies, asthma, and immunological disorders arise and would encourage you to contact Sheila Heitzig, JD, MNM, CAE, AAAAI Director of Practice and Policy, at (414) 272-6071 or sheitzig@aaaai.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Beth Fasano, MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Beth Fasano, MD, MSPH, FAAAAI
President, American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology

University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine
Iowa City, IA