

Statement for the Record
American Nurses Association
The Future of Telehealth: How COVID-19 is Changing the Delivery of Virtual Care
House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee
March 2, 2021

The American Nurses Association (ANA), representing the interests of the nation’s 4.2 million registered nurses, commends the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee for convening this hearing on “The Future of Telehealth: How COVID-19 is Changing the Delivery of Virtual Care,” and appreciates the opportunity to submit this statement for the record.

ANA is committed to advancing the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting a safe and ethical work environment, bolstering the health and wellness of nurses, and advocating on health care issues that affect nurses and the public. ANA is at the forefront of improving quality of health care for all.

Registered nurses work in a variety of health care settings, including in rural, urban, and underserved areas. They also work in a variety of specialties, and, for many, they are the sole and trusted provider in a community. Nurses are highly trained and well educated to effectively use telehealth technologies, supervise remote patient monitoring activities, and provide quality care using tools that promote access to timely care without the burdens often existing in remote geographic locations or appointment shortage areas.

The opportunities that telehealth technologies can provide are limitless and witnessing the potential for expanding access to care has been inspiring during the pandemic. The diversity of geographic regions, social determinants of health, and challenges to accessing quality care can create barriers to individual and population health; however, technology can bridge the gap between these divides. The urban and rural divide is just one area that we can close using telehealth through access to diverse providers across the country that meet the needs of patients and their families. This allows for the realignment of resources across the country in order to reduce barriers to quality care in every community.

As an organization, ANA has been a leader in telehealth policy since first developing principles on the subject in 1998¹. There is robust evidence demonstrating that telehealth technologies make health care more effective and efficient by electronically connecting clinicians to clinicians, patients to clinicians, and patients and care givers to other resources. This approach facilitates remote diagnosis and treatment, continuous monitoring and adjustment of therapies, support for patient self-care, and the leveraging of providers across large populations of patients.

ANA continues to call on Congress to remove the Medicare originating site and rural area restrictions. Increased utilization of telehealth during the pandemic confirms that is not just rural and designated originating sites that benefit from using telehealth. There are appointment shortages, transportation challenges for populations, and patients with chronic conditions in urban areas that would benefit from telehealth beyond the current pandemic. Additionally, more research on health outcomes in order to prevent emergency room visits is needed to address the extra burden on the healthcare system that is already overwhelmed with COVID-19 response and lasting impacts.

¹ <https://www.nursingworld.org/~4a9307/globalassets/docs/ana/practice/ana-core-principles-on-connected-health.pdf>

Thank you for giving nurses the opportunity to provide input on the importance of telehealth now and in the future. ANA stands ready to work with the Subcommittee to find and implement sustainable solutions regarding this important issue. If you have any questions, please contact Ingrida Lusic, Vice President of Policy and Government Affairs, at (301) 628-5081 or Ingrid.Lusic@ana.org.