Updated CMS Guidance Provides Increased Payment for Telephone Services

ASGE applauds CMS efforts to continue to provide more flexibilities to providers in the fight against COVID-19.

Today, the Agency announced that it will provide parity in payment for telephone/audio-only services. Specifically, Medicare payment for the telephone evaluation and management visits would be equivalent to Medicare payment for office/outpatient visits with established patients effective March 1, 2020. This means that payment for CPT codes 99441-99443 would increase from a range of about $14-$41 to about $46-$110. ASGE is seeking clarification from CMS on if the amended policy also applies to new patients.

Advocating for this change has been a priority for ASGE and its sister societies. ASGE’s initial request for this change was highlighted in its March 20 letter to congressional leaders.

The guidance updated today provides temporary regulatory waivers and new rules to give providers maximum flexibility in response to COVID-19.

*Telephone Evaluation, Management/Assessment and Management Services, and Behavioral Health and Education Services*

- A broad range of clinicians, including physicians, can now provide certain services by telephone to their patients.
- Medicare payment for the telephone evaluation and management visits (CPT codes 99441-99443) is equivalent to the Medicare payment for office/outpatient visits with established patients effective March 1, 2020.
- When clinicians are furnishing an evaluation and management (E/M) service that would otherwise be reported as an in-person or telehealth visit, using audio-only technology, practitioners may bill using these telephone E/M codes provided that it is appropriate to furnish the service using audio-only technology and all of the required elements in the applicable telephone E/M code (99441-99443) description are met.
- Using new waiver authority, CMS is also allowing many behavioral health and education services to be furnished via telehealth using audio-only communications. The full list of telehealth services notes which services are eligible to be furnished via audio-only technology, including the telephone evaluation and management visits: [https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-General-Information/Telehealth/Telehealth-Codes](https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-General-Information/Telehealth/Telehealth-Codes)