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## Monroe County Medical Society Telemedicine Position Statement

### Position

The Monroe County Medical Society supports the use of telemedicine when used in concert with the American Medical Association Telemedicine Principles, including but not limited to the position that with few exceptions, a patient-physician relationship must be established before providing care via telemedicine to ensure proper diagnoses and appropriate follow-up care. In addition, the provision of telemedicine services must include timely communication with the patient's medical home and/or treating physician(s).

### Background

New York State defines telemedicine as the use of synchronous, two-way electronic audio-visual communications to deliver clinical health services which include the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of a patient, when such patient is at the originating site and a telemedicine provider is at a distant site. Having been used in rural health settings for many years, telemedicine is not a new concept. As telemedicine evolves, broader case uses are being considered and implemented.

Organized medicine, including the American Medical Association, the American College of Physicians and the American Academy of Pediatrics have carefully considered and commented on the use of telemedicine. While there is agreement that the use of telemedicine can improve access to care, there are also recognized limitations of its use.

Physicians and other clinicians must, therefore, carefully consider the use of telemedicine and ensure that standards of care set by the State of New York and other regulatory entities are being followed when providing care via telemedicine. In addition, consideration should be given to missed opportunities to provide preventive services through the use of telemedicine. Given the complexities of these decisions, the Monroe County Medical Society recommends that physicians carefully consider the use cases for telemedicine.

This position statement attempts to assist physicians as consideration is given to integrating telemedicine into practice. The position will evolve over time as circumstances warrant.

### American Medical Association Principles

- A valid patient-physician relationship must be established before the provision of telemedicine services, through:
  - A face-to-face examination, if a face-to-face encounter would be required in the provision of the same service in the real world;
  - A consultation with another physician who has an ongoing patient-physician relationship with the patient; or
  - Meeting evidence-based practice guidelines on telemedicine regarding establishing a patient-physician relationship developed by major medical specialty societies.

Exceptions to the foregoing include on-call, cross coverage situations; emergency medical treatment; and other exceptions that become recognized as meeting or improving the standard of care.

- Physicians and other health practitioners delivering telemedicine services must be licensed in the state where the patient receives services, or be providing these services as otherwise authorized by that state's medical board. They must also abide by state licensure laws and state medical

practice laws and requirements in the state in which the patient receives services. The delivery of telemedicine services must be consistent with state scope of practice laws.

- The standards and scope of telemedicine services should be consistent with related in-person services. The delivery of telemedicine services must follow evidence-based practice guidelines to the degree they are available, to ensure patient safety, quality of care and positive health outcomes.
- Patients seeking care delivered via telemedicine must have a choice of provider, and have access to the licensure and board certification qualifications of the health care practitioners who are providing the care in advance of their visit. Patients must also be made aware of their cost-sharing responsibilities and any limitations in drug that can be prescribed in advance of the provision of the telemedicine service.
- The patient's medical history must be collected as part of the provision of any telemedicine service. The provision of telemedicine services must be properly documented and should include providing a visit summary to the patient. Telemedicine services must abide by laws addressing privacy and security of patients' medical information.
- The provision of telemedicine services must include care coordination with the patient's medical home and/or existing treating physicians. Protocols for referrals for emergency services must also be established.

## References

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