DIGITAL HEALTH IN THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

The nature of COVID-19 and its ease of transmission required our health care system to adapt and transform virtually overnight. Prior to the Novel Coronavirus, telehealth services were not commonplace in most of the country despite increasing awareness about the potential value of technology and digital health to tackle both access and costs issues.

In response to the global pandemic, federal and state policymakers, as well as commercial health plans, rightly removed barriers to allow providers to expand telehealth and digital health services to ensure patients continued to have access to the care they need in a safe manner.

Removing barriers and providing reimbursement for telehealth and digital health technology has preserved access to care. However, we must take advantage of this opportunity to ensure we maintain the expanded role of digital health long after this public health emergency ends.

Policymakers and health plans must evaluate and ensure that, in a world with COVID-19, remote care is delivered in a quality manner. It is imperative that CMS, state policymakers, and payers establish quality standards for the delivery and payment of services provided via telehealth and digital health services.

Policies restricting the use of telehealth and digital health technology such as remote patient monitoring can be safely removed and replaced by establishing clear quality performance standards for providers. Such standards are already commonly included as contractual and network requirements for commercial insurance, Medicaid, and Medicare.

COVID-19 has given us an unprecedented opportunity to increase the utilization of telehealth and digital health technology. It is imperative to establish quality standards for successfully removing dated and restrictive policies regarding the usage of these technologies.

Establishing quality standards will allow for the following policy changes to be made safely:

- Eliminate originating site restrictions
- Include telehealth providers and services in network adequacy calculations
- Provide reimbursement and incentives for digital health technology

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