NARA
The National Association of Rehabilitation Providers and Agencies

Protect Beneficiary Permanent Access to Telehealth by Qualified Rehabilitation Professionals

Members of the National Association of Rehabilitation Providers and Agencies (NARA) recognize telehealth as a vital tool in delivering timely, consistent care to Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries—especially those facing mobility challenges, transportation barriers, or other obstacles to in-person visits. Incorporating telehealth into rehabilitation therapy has significantly enhanced both healthcare accessibility and system efficiency. To continue advancing patient outcomes, reducing disparities, and strengthening the healthcare infrastructure, it is critical to support legislation that permanently authorizes telehealth services for qualified providers, including physical therapists, occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists.

The Value of Telehealth in Rehabilitation Therapy

- **Enhances patient safety and mobility** by allowing therapists to conduct real-time assessments of the home environment—an important service not typically available through traditional outpatient care.
- **Improves access to care** for individuals in rural or underserved areas and those facing transportation challenges, leading to better outcomes for conditions like stroke, chronic pain, and neurological disorders.
- **Lowers healthcare costs** by reducing hospitalizations, emergency room visits, and readmissions, while supporting stronger treatment adherence and improved clinical outcomes.
- **Promotes patient and caregiver empowerment** through direct interaction with therapists in the home setting, enabling timely problem-solving and practical implementation of strategies that boost function, safety, and engagement.

Evidence Supporting Telehealth by Rehabilitation Providers

- **Post-stroke patients benefit from telerehabilitation**: A 2023 systematic review found that telerehabilitation interventions delivered by qualified rehabilitation providers improved balance, trunk control, and mobility in individuals recovering from stroke[1].
- **Telerehabilitation is feasible and safe in early stroke recovery**: A 2023 feasibility study demonstrated that initiating intensive arm motor therapy via telehealth during inpatient rehabilitation and continuing it at home resulted in strong compliance and functional gains[2].
- **Home-based telerehabilitation is a viable alternative when in-person care is limited**: A pilot study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic showed that home-based telerehabilitation was both feasible and effective for community-dwelling stroke survivors[3].

Request for Support: Expand Permanent Telehealth Access

We respectfully urge support for **H.R. 1614**, bipartisan legislation introduced by Representatives Mike Thompson (CA-04), Mike Kelly (PA-16), and Adrian Smith (NE-03) of the House Ways & Means Health Subcommittee. This bill would permanently expand the list of authorized telehealth providers under Medicare to include **qualified physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, and audiologists**. It represents a critical step toward making telehealth a lasting, accessible, and equitable component of healthcare delivery.

While we recognize and support the broader goals of the **CONNECT for Health Act**, the current language does **not** permanently authorize rehabilitation therapy providers to deliver care via telehealth. In contrast, H.R. 1614 would ensure long-term access to telehealth services for Medicare beneficiaries—particularly those in rural, underserved, and mobility-limited populations—by fully recognizing therapy professionals as qualified telehealth providers.

NARA is the trade association representing 100+ organizations consisting of over 90,000 healthcare professionals dedicated to providing a multitude of skilled rehabilitation therapy services to individuals in a variety of settings including inpatient, outpatient, skilled care, assisted living, educational systems, industry/occupational health.

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1. Ali, M., et al. (2023). *Effects of telerehabilitation interventions on balance and mobility in post-stroke patients: A systematic review and meta-analysis*. Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Practice.
2. Wu, C. Y., et al. (2023). *Feasibility and safety of a telerehabilitation arm motor program for stroke patients during inpatient to home transition*. Neurorehabilitation and Neural Repair.
3. Sakakibara, B. M., et al. (2023). *Feasibility of delivering home-based telerehabilitation to stroke survivors during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine.