



HEADACHE  
ON THE HILL

# CO-SPONSOR CONNECT FOR HEALTH ACT

(H.R. 4206 / S. 1261)

## Enact permanent telehealth flexibilities

The improvement of technology brought about the increased utilization of telehealth (both video/audio visits and audio-only visits) and remote patient monitoring, but telehealth's surge can mostly be attributed to the COVID era. During the pandemic, an amendment to the Social Security Act relaxed restrictions related to telehealth for seniors and disabled people using Medicare. **Short-term extensions of these important telehealth flexibilities are disruptive to clinical practice and patient care.** The Creating Opportunities Now for Necessary and Effective Care Technologies for Health Act, known as the CONNECT for Health Act, seeks to make permanent key telehealth flexibilities under Medicare and includes provisions to strengthen oversight and program integrity, including clarifications related to remote patient monitoring.<sup>1</sup>

### WHAT DOES THE CONNECT FOR HEALTH ACT DO?

The CONNECT for Health Act would permanently permit the telehealth flexibilities that were implemented during the COVID era for Medicare patients. In addition, new benefits would be added to further expand telehealth and remote patient monitoring.

- Availability of neurologists varies substantially by region, but the prevalence of neurologic conditions in Medicare populations across the country does not.<sup>2</sup> The bill permanently removes geographic restrictions on Medicare telehealth services, allowing beneficiaries to receive care regardless of where they live.<sup>3</sup> Federally qualified health centers and rural health clinics will continue to be eligible as distant sites.<sup>4</sup>

### CONNECT for Health Act Will:



Make headache specialists more accessible

Create more stability in the healthcare system

Permanently remove geographic regulations

- To further alleviate the demand for physicians in rural areas, the bill authorizes the Secretary of Health and Human Services to waive limitations on practitioner types permitted to furnish telehealth services when clinically appropriate, with safeguards to ensure quality and accountability. This allows patients in rural and underserved areas to have more physicians to choose from that may not necessarily be locally available.
- The bill strengthens program integrity and quality oversight for telehealth services, including enhanced monitoring of billing patterns, increased resources for oversight, and public reporting to support transparency and accountability.
- The CONNECT Act would remove unnecessary in-person visit requirements for telemental health services.
- Indigenous (American Indian or Alaska Native) (41%) adults were more likely to use telemedicine compared with Hispanic (33%), Black (33%), Asian (33%), and White adults (39%).<sup>5</sup> The bill updates Medicare telehealth originating site policies for Native American health facilities, helping reduce administrative and financial barriers to providing telehealth services in Tribal communities.

## HOW WOULD THIS IMPACT HEADACHE DISORDER PATIENTS?

- 43.3% of adults 65 or older used telehealth during 2021.<sup>6</sup> This shows the willingness of seniors to seek out and participate in telehealth care, even with audio-only services. Audio-only services are important to maintain given the lack of broadband access for many in rural communities.<sup>7</sup>
- Neurologists and in particular, headache specialists are difficult to find, especially in rural areas.<sup>8</sup> Telehealth allows seniors and disabled people using Medicare to find headache and migraine care regardless of where their residency is.
- There are fewer than 1000 United Council for Neurological Subspecialties certified headache specialists. An estimated 3,700 specialists are needed to treat the demand.<sup>9</sup> Telehealth care allows patients who do not have a specialist nearby to find availability among the few headache specialists in the country.
- Ineffective or untimely care for headache disorders may contribute to the progression of the disease from episodic to chronic.<sup>11</sup> Telehealth care allows patients to seek care sooner, reducing the likelihood of escalation of their disease.
- Headache disorder patients may experience light, sound and scent sensitivity.<sup>12</sup> And, chronic pain patients, like headache disorder patients, may experience limited mobility, and travel can be particularly burdensome and triggering for those living with chronic pain. Telehealth can be an especially helpful option for headache patients to avoid these potential triggers.

The **CONNECT for Health Act** has a large number of bipartisan cosponsors, showing overwhelming support for telehealth services.

### Notes

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4. National Association of Rural Health Clinics, Telehealth Policy, (last visited August 7, 2024) [https://www.narhc.org/narhc/Telehealth\\_Policy.asp](https://www.narhc.org/narhc/Telehealth_Policy.asp).
5. National Center for Health Statistics, Telemedicine Use Among Adults: United States, 2021, [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db445.htm#:~:text=Key%20findings-,Data%20from%20the%20National%20Health%20Interview%20Survey,compared%20with%20men%20\(31.7%25\)](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db445.htm#:~:text=Key%20findings-,Data%20from%20the%20National%20Health%20Interview%20Survey,compared%20with%20men%20(31.7%25).). (last visited August 23, 2024).
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**43%** of adults 65 or older used telehealth in 2021

Telehealth allows seniors and disabled people using Medicare to find headache and migraine care regardless of where they reside



**AHDA ASK:**  
Co-sponsor  
the **CONNECT for Health Act**.