

CHARLESTON PULMONARY ASSOCIATES, P.A. CAROLINA SLEEP SPECIALISTS, P.A.

Telehealth Policy

I. Introduction

- a. The advancements and continued development of medical and communications technology have had a profound impact on the practice of medicine and offer opportunities for improving the delivery and accessibility of healthcare, particularly in the area of telemedicine, which is the practice of medicine using electronic communication.
- b. Charleston Pulmonary Associates,PA/Carolina Sleep Specialists, PA recognizes that using telehealth technologies in the delivery of medical services offers potential benefits in the provision of medical care. The appropriate application of these technologies can enhance medical care by facilitating communication with the provider and their patients or other health care providers, including prescribing medication, obtaining laboratory results, scheduling appointments, monitoring chronic conditions, providing healthcare information, and clarifying medical advice.
- c. A provider using telehealth technologies in the provision of medical services to a patient must take appropriate steps to establish the Provider-Patient relationship and conduct all appropriate evaluations and history of the patient consistent with traditional standards of care for the patient.
- d. Some situations are appropriate for the utilization of telehealth technologies in addition to, or in lieu of in-person medical care, and others are not.
- e. Charleston Pulmonary Associates,PA/Carolina Sleep Specialists, PA has established these guidelines to educate providers as to the appropriate use of telehealth technologies in the practice of medicine.
- f. Charleston Pulmonary Associates,PA/Carolina Sleep Specialists, PA is committed to assuring patient access to the convenience and benefits afforded by telehealth technologies, while promoting the responsible practice of medicine.

II. General Guidelines

- a. These guidelines should not be construed to alter the scope of practice of any healthcare provider or authorize the delivery of healthcare services in a setting, or in a manner, not otherwise authorized by law. These guidelines support a standard of care and scope of practice notwithstanding the delivery tool or business method in enabling Provider-to-Patient communications.
- b. Approved clinicians who may bill for a covered telehealth service are:
 - i. Physician
 - ii. Nurse Practitioner
 - iii. Physician Assistant
 - iv. Licensed Professional Counselor
 - v. Clinical Nurse Specialist
- c. Approved clinicians who provide medical care, electronically or otherwise, should maintain the highest degree of professionalism and follow these guidelines:
 - i. Place the welfare of patients first
 - ii. Maintain acceptable and appropriate standards of practice
 - iii. Adhere to recognized ethical codes governing the medical profession
 - iv. Properly supervise non-physician clinicians
 - v. Protect patient confidentiality
- d. Providers should dress appropriately for the virtual visit and wear the same level of professional attire as in the practice setting.
- e. The telehealth visit should be performed in a secure, neat and professional environment with the appropriate lighting, camera and backdrop.

III. Licensure

- a. An approved clinician must be licensed, or under the jurisdiction, of the medical board of the state where the patient is located.
- b. The practice of medicine occurs where the patient is located at the time telemedicine technologies are used.
- c. Approved clinicians who treat patients through online service sites are practicing medicine and must possess appropriate licensure in all jurisdictions where patients receive care.

IV. **Provider-Patient Relationship**

- a. Where an existing provider-patient relationship is not present, the provider must take appropriate steps to establish a Provider-patient relationship.
- b. A Provider is discouraged from rendering medical advice and/or care using telehealth technologies without:
 - i. Fully verifying and authenticating the location and to the extent possible, identifying the requesting patient
 - ii. Disclosing and validating the provider's identity and applicable credential(s)
 - iii. Obtaining appropriate consents from requesting patients after disclosures regarding the delivery and models and treatment methods or limitations, including any special informed consents regarding the use of telehealth technologies

V. **Evaluation and Treatment**

- a. A documented medical evaluation and collection of relevant clinical history commensurate with the presentation of the patient to establish diagnoses and identify underlying conditions and/or contra-indications to the treatment recommended/provided must be obtained prior to providing treatment, including issuing prescriptions, electronically or otherwise.
- b. Treatment and consultation recommendations made in an online setting, including issuing a prescription via electronic means will be held to the same standards of appropriate practice as those in traditional (encounter in person) settings.

VI. **Prescribing**

- a. Telehealth technologies, where prescribing may be contemplated, must implement measures to uphold patient safety in the absence of traditional physical examination.
- b. Such measures should guarantee that the identity of the patient and provider is clearly established and that detailed documentation for the clinical evaluation and resulting prescription is both enforced and independently kept.
- c. Measures to assure informed, accurate, and error prevention prescribing practices (e.g. integration with e-Prescription systems) are encouraged.
- d. Prescribing medications, in-person or via telehealth, is at the professional discretion of the Provider.
- e. **During the current public state of emergency, the enforcement of the prohibition on prescribing Schedule II-V medications via Telemedicine has been suspended for as long as the public health emergency remains in effect.** Please see the attached document: Public Health State of Emergency Order 2020-BME-PH-03 for additional information.
- f. The indication, appropriateness, and safety considerations for each telehealth visit prescription must be evaluated by the Provider in accordance with current standards of practice and carry the same professional accountability as prescriptions delivered during an encounter in person.

VII. **Informed Consent**

- a. Evidence documenting the appropriate patient informed consent for the use of telehealth technologies must be obtained and maintained.
- b. Appropriate informed consent should include:
 - i. Identification of the patient, the Provider, and the Provider's credentials
 - ii. The types of transmissions permitted using telehealth technologies
 - iii. Details on security measures taken with the use of telehealth technologies
 - iv. The benefits and risks of utilizing telehealth technology

VIII. **Emergency Services**

- a. An emergency plan is required and must be provided by the Provider to the patient when the care provided using telehealth technologies indicates that a referral to an acute care facility or ER for treatment is necessary for the safety of the patient.
- b. The emergency plan should include a formal, written protocol appropriate to the services being rendered via telehealth technologies.

IX. **Privacy and Security**

- a. Providers should meet or exceed applicable federal and state legal requirements of medical/health information privacy, including compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and state privacy, confidentiality, security and medical retention rules.

- b.** Written policies and procedures should be maintained at the same standard as face-to-face encounters for documentation, maintenance and transmission of records of the encounter using telehealth technologies.