



Fundamental Benefits

Providers

- ✓ Cost efficiencies
- ✓ No physical office visits necessary
- ✓ Improved quality of care, especially in chronic disease
- ✓ Increased overall patient volume
- ✓ Improves overall patient satisfaction
- ✓ Patient monitoring and adherence
- ✓ Reduced emergency department utilization and patient readmissions
- ✓ Faster access to specialists when required

Patients and Caregivers

- ✓ Enhanced and faster access to care
- ✓ Increased convenience
- ✓ Reduction in stress, avoid the hustle and bustle
- ✓ Reduced wait time for appointments and follow-up
- ✓ Reduced out-of-pocket costs, e.g. travel expenses

The Telemedicine Revolution Has Begun!

With the current COVID-19 crisis, more practitioners have begun migrating to telemedicine. It's time to take another look at this rapidly changing clinical technology. It is being embraced as an effective way to see patients without an office visit, reduce costs, increase patient satisfaction, improve overall outcomes and increase patient throughput – specifically in chronic disease patients. Efficient long-term management of chronic disease is one of the greatest challenges facing today's healthcare system. The advantages in leveraging telemedicine are now greater than ever.

Fundamental Benefits for Providers and Patients



Virtual visits can help providers deliver convenient, routine patient evaluations outside the confines of a physical office space. It adds flexibility and convenience to the clinical process. In addition to the advantages offered by telephonic consultations, wearables and smartphone technologies have now progressed to the point where they can serve as useful tracking tools for monitoring vitals and adherence. They can also send alerts when a care plan is disrupted or not producing treatment goals. With this in mind, smartphones and other technologies are likely to become an integral part of the healthcare monitoring of many – if not most – chronic disease patients.

While the adoption of technology can sometimes come with a learning curve, the potential advances in provider/patient communications and resulting improvement in outcomes are likely to far outweigh initial implementation challenges. Providers should begin investigating how telemedicine can fit into and enhance their current practices.

Provider Advantages in Adopting Telemedicine Technologies

There are a number of areas in which Telemedicine can be beneficial to providers involved in the care of chronic disease patients, including:

Improved Quality – Studies have shown that the quality of healthcare services delivered via telemedicine is as good as that provided through traditional in-person office visits. In some settings, such as ICU care, telemedicine has also been associated with increased patient outcomes and satisfaction.

Billing Requirements for CCM Code 99490

Chronic care management services, at least 20 minutes of clinical staff time directed by a physician or other qualified health care professional, per calendar month, with the following required elements:

- ✓ Multiple (two or more) chronic conditions expected to last at least 12 months, or until the death of the patient
- ✓ Chronic conditions place the patient at significant risk of death, acute exacerbation/ decompensation or functional decline
- ✓ Comprehensive care plan established, implemented, revised or monitored Assumes 15 minutes of work by the billing practitioner per month

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Technical Writer



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Improved Access – Telemedicine can improve patient outcomes and satisfaction. frequency and timeliness of care access for patients, just as importantly also allows physicians and health facilities to expand their reach and patient volumes. Given increasing demands of providers time, telemedicine has the unique capacity to improve provider efficiency and thereby enable them to serve more patients.

Patient Demand – Consumers want telemedicine. Indeed, the greatest positive impact of telemedicine is on the patient and families or caregivers. Telemedicine by nature reduces travel time, stress and inconvenience for the patient. Tele-services can also offer patient access to providers who might not otherwise be available to them – or at least offer initial access to these specialists in an expedited manner.

Cost Efficiencies – Reducing or containing the cost of healthcare is a fundamental driver of the emerging reimbursement model. Telemedicine has been shown to reduce healthcare costs and increase efficiency through improving management of chronic diseases, enabling more efficient professional staffing, reducing travel times and shortening hospital stays.

Exploring and Evaluating Telemedicine

Taking the First Steps:

As providers begin to evaluate their virtual care options, a number of key factors should be considered.

First, providers should gauge the need and urgency for telephonic services in their specific market, and then craft a strategic plan to best address the proposed new offerings.

Second, providers should assess capacity for any new patients they hope to recruit. Shifting patients who are historically high utilizers to a mix of in-person and virtual visits will likely expand patient load capacity.

Finally, as providers look to incorporate new technologies, they must become familiar with all aspects of the new technologies – or bring in outside expertise to help navigate both the technology itself and the methodologies and safeguards that must be employed in terms of patient privacy, billing practices, etc.

Telehealth Services and Reimbursement

Private and public payers have been expanding coverage for chronic disease management. In January 2015, Medicare began reimbursing telehealth providers for remote chronic care management (CCM) under CPT code 99490. Eligible providers include physicians and select non-physician practitioners. The CCM billing code can be used for services relating to care plan development, communication and coordination with other treating health professionals, and medication management. The code may be billed once per month for qualified patients.

Questions? Further Information? Discussion?

Whether you have a question, would like further information, have a group or individual, I would be happy to schedule some time to speak with you! Please feel free to contact me at: David Tucker, CQ Technologies, 5103 Eastman Avenue, Midland, MI 48640.

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