

To: House Committee on Health Care
From: Jessa Barnard, Vermont Medical Society
Date: February 5, 2020
RE: H. 723, Store-and-Forward Telemedicine

The Vermont Medical Society is the State's largest physician membership organization, representing approximately 2,400 physicians, physician assistants and medical students of all practice types and locations. VMS is strongly in support of H. 723, and increasing reimbursement for telehealth services, including those provided via store-and-forward means.

According to the Center for Connected Health Policy (CCHP), store-and-forward services "allow for the electronic transmission of medical information, such as digital images, documents, and pre-recorded videos through secure email communication." CCHP goes on to explain that store-and-forward communications primarily take place among medical professionals to aid in diagnoses and medical consultations when live video or face-to-face contact is not necessary. Common examples include radiology, pathology, dermatology, ophthalmology, wound care and dental services.

Because these types of services do not require the specialist, the primary care provider or the patient to be available simultaneously, the need for coordinating schedules is removed, and the efficiency of the health care services is increased. Therefore, store-and-forward can not only significantly improve not clinical outcomes, but increase access to care, and improve workflows for both primary care providers and specialists.

CCHP lists five important benefits that store-and-forward can provide to patients and providers:

1. Patients can get timely specialty care without needing to travel beyond the location of their primary care providers;
2. Wait times for specialty care are lessened, especially in areas with shortages of medical specialists;
3. Primary care providers and medical specialists can review patient cases, regardless of their respective locations;
4. Medical specialists can review patient cases when it is convenient for them;
5. The Store and Forward process can overcome language and cultural barriers.

Given the potential benefits to both patients and providers with store-and-forward technology, we ask the Committee to support reimbursement for these services.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. Please don't hesitate to reach out with questions to me via email or phone at jbarnard@vtmd.org or 802-917-1460.