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Welcome to America's Physician Groups' "Healthcare on the Hill," where you can get the latest on healthcare happenings in our nation's capital--and with a special focus on the value-based care movement.

As our nation--and the world--continues to face the many challenge presented by COVID-19, we are working to ensure you have the very latest information on the virus and our rapidly changing healthcare landscape.

*Think someone else may enjoy "Healthcare on the Hill?" **Forward this email and have them click [here](#) to be added to our subscription list.** And remember, you can always visit our [website](#) for more news and resources.*

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HHS Releases Report on the Flexibility of Telehealth Services

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released a [report](#) outlining trends to Medicare fee-for-service primary care visits and the use of telehealth services during the pandemic. The report examined Medicare claims data from January through June to analyze if the flexibilities in Medicare telehealth flexibilities have benefited access to the primary health care. Key findings include:

- Medicare FFS in-person visits for primary care declined significantly in mid-March and began to rise again through May
- Nearly half of Medicare primary care visits were provided via telehealth in April, compared with less than one percent before the PHE in February
- As in-person visits started to resume in mid-April, the use of telehealth in primary care declined slightly but remained steady at the beginning of June.
- Providers in rural counties had smaller increases in Medicare primary care telehealth visits compared with providers in urban areas

CMS Updates Data on COVID-19 Impacts on Medicare Beneficiaries

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued its first monthly [snapshot](#) of the impact of COVID-19 on the Medicare population. The data shows that the COVID-19 public health emergency is disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations and ethnic communities where we see a high rate of chronic health conditions. The agency looked at the cases and hospitalizations of Medicare beneficiaries from January to June. Key data points include:

- Beneficiaries continue to be hospitalized at higher rates than other racial and ethnic groups, with 670 hospitalizations per 100,000 beneficiaries
- Beneficiaries eligible for both Medicare and Medicaid – who often suffer from multiple chronic conditions and have low incomes – were hospitalized at a rate more than 5 times higher than beneficiaries with Medicare only
- Beneficiaries with end-stage renal disease (ESRD) continue to be hospitalized at higher rates than other segments of the Medicare population
- CMS paid \$2.8 billion in Medicare fee-for-service claims for COVID-related hospitalizations, or an average of \$25,255 per beneficiary

HHS Urges Congress to Address Surprise Billing

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a [press release](#) on a [new report](#) released outlining ways to combat surprise billing to protect patients, the health care system and promote more transparency. HHS Secretary Alex Azar stated, “Americans have the right to know what a healthcare service is going to cost before they receive it. President Trump and his administration have done their part to deliver historic transparency around the prices of many procedures. Now it’s time for Congress to do what we all agree is necessary: combat surprise billing with an approach that puts patients in control and benefits all Americans.”

CMS to Pay Providers Requesting COVID-19 Patients to Self-Quarantine

Last week, CMS and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced

that Medicare and Medicaid would pay providers to ask their patients who have been tested and inspected to have COVID-19 to self-quarantine as they wait for their test results. The agency's [press release](#) stated that if patients are suspected to test positive, if they self-quarantine for just a few days, this could reduce the transmission by 86 percent.

APG's 2020 Colloquium Virtual Event - November 17-19

APG's Colloquium 2020 will now be a virtual event on November 17-19. Registration for the Colloquium will open in early August. Please download our [calendar reminder here](#) to reserve these dates on your schedule now. Please stay tuned. As we confirm details, we will keep you all posted on Colloquium 2020 registration and news as frequently as necessary.



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