



March 20, 2020

The Honorable Gretchen Whitmer
P.O. Box 30013
Lansing, Michigan 48909

Dear Governor Whitmer,

In light of the rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic, and in the interest of the health and safety of patients we serve, the Michigan Physical Therapy Association respectfully submits this urgent request for two key policy actions: 1) Mandating insurer payment for physical therapist services provided via telehealth, and 2) An executive order to limit operations of physical therapy clinics to provide unemployment insurance-related cost relief.

Many of Michigan's citizens have important, pressing, and timely rehabilitation needs that require them to continue their rehabilitation during this pandemic, and permitting them continued access to physical therapy services while maintaining social distancing through the use of telehealth is essential.

Telehealth

Telehealth is a well-embedded element of physical therapist practice. Numerous resources from the American Physical Therapy Association and the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy are available to physical therapists to support the use of telehealth:

<http://www.apta.org/Telehealth/>

http://www.apta.org/uploadedFiles/APTAorg/About_Us/Policies/Practice/TelehealthHODPolicy.pdf#search=%22telehealth%22

<https://www.fsbpt.org/Portals/0/documents/free-resources/TelehealthInPhysicalTherapy2015.pdf>

From a state regulatory scope of practice perspective, telehealth is permitted by physical therapists:

333.16283 Definitions.

Sec. 16283.

As used in this section and sections 16284 to 16288:

(a) "Health professional" means an individual who is engaging in the practice of a health profession.

(b) "Prescriber" means that term as defined in section 17708.

(c) "Telehealth" means the use of electronic information and telecommunication technologies to support or promote long-distance clinical health care, patient and professional health-related education, public health, or health administration. Telehealth may include, but is not limited to, telemedicine. As used in this subdivision, "telemedicine" means that term as defined in section 3476 of the insurance code of 1956, 1956 PA 218, MCL 500.3476.

(d) "Telehealth service" means a health care service that is provided through telehealth.

Therefore, similar to the States of California and Kentucky, the MPTA respectfully requests that issuance of a short-term executive order that requires insurers to pay for telehealth-based



physical therapist services during the COVID-19 pandemic to allow Michigan's citizens to continue to receive care while maintaining strict social distancing.

Relief for Unemployment Insurance-Related Costs

As physical therapy clinics drastically reduce the volume of patients seen in the clinic (i.e. deferring all clinic visits except those with conditions deemed essential, are unable to be managed via telehealth, and only in circumstances where infection risk/exposure has been assessed), furloughs, temporary layoffs, terminations etc are on the rise. It is essential that physical therapy clinics have relief from unemployment insurance-related costs, however this relief is not available unless there is an executive order for physical therapy clinics to limit operations. Therefore, the MPTA respectfully requests an executive order to limit physical therapy clinic operations for providing care to those patients with essential health care needs.

Thank you for your leadership in this time of crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Shoemaker'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

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