



**National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society**

Greater Carolinas
Chapter

Increase Access to Telehealth Services

Support the South Carolina Insurance Reimbursement Telemedicine Act (H.4901) to Ensure Quality and Affordable Access to Telehealth Services for All South Carolinians.

What is multiple sclerosis (MS)?

- MS is an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system.
- MS interrupts the flow of information within the brain, and between the brain and body.
- Symptoms range from numbness and tingling to blindness and paralysis.

In a longitudinal study of over 2,000 people with MS, **over 65 percent expressed difficulty walking** and 15 percent required a wheelchair or scooter.

People living with MS in rural areas tend to be **diagnosed later** than those living in urban areas; are more likely to report that MS interferes with their quality of life; and are less likely to be taking one of the MS disease-modifying therapies (Buchanan, et al, 2006).

Background on Telemedicine:

At least 20 states and the District of Columbia have required private insurance plans to cover telemedicine services at reimbursement rates equal to an in-person consultation. Forty-four states reimburse under Medicaid for limited services, some restricting reimbursement to only rural or low provider access areas.

Telemedicine services can increase the effectiveness of patients' management of chronic diseases, like MS, thereby improving patient outcomes.

Specifically, the South Carolina Insurance Reimbursement Telemedicine Act would increase access to telemedicine services by:

- Requiring all insurers in South Carolina to cover services to the same extent that the services would be covered if provided through in-person consultation;
- Requiring that deductibles, coinsurance and/or copays for telemedicine services not exceed the amount applicable to the same service when it is delivered in-person; and
- Requiring the establishment of a physician-patient relationship so that services rendered via telemedicine could include prescribing, providing treatment recommendations, the direction of medication administration, and the provision of therapeutic treatment services.

Nothing in this bill requires services deemed inappropriate for telemedicine by a health care provider to be completed through telemedicine.