

“In-Person” Requirements Take Telehealth Backwards



American
TeleDentistry
Association

The Michigan Board of Dentistry is considering a rule change which alters the definition of “patient of record” to require patients be examined “in-person” before any care can be rendered. **This arbitrary requirement has no clinical basis and adds costs and barriers for Michigan patients** – especially the more than 1.7 million residents living in areas with dentist shortages.

Requiring an initial in-person encounter will only exacerbate the disparity in care.

The legislature has made it a policy priority that providers should be able to offer care via telehealth technologies with no prior in-person exam.

MCL Section 500.3476 states that any policy:

*“**shall not require face-to-face contact** between a health care professional and a patient for services appropriately provided through telemedicine.”*

This issue has already been considered. At the September 29, 2020 Board of Dentistry Rules Committee Work Group on these rules, they **summarily dismissed an American Association of Orthodontist’s proposal to add “in-person”** to the definition of “patient of record.”

In dismissing it the board stated:

The Rules Committee does not agree with the comment to add “in person” to the definition of “patient of record” as **this requirement is inconsistent with the concept of telemedicine** and the dentist or dental therapist should be the professional to make the determination of whether they must examine and diagnose the patient in person.”

**Clinical
Evidence
is Clear**

“Teledentistry had excellent sensitivity (93.8%) and specificity (94.2%) for diagnosing dental pathologies. Teledentistry was not associated with any serious adverse events, and the acceptability rate (95.3%) among [patients] was excellent. Teledentistry has excellent accuracy for diagnosing dental pathologies.”

“There is a consistent trend in the literature supporting the validity and reliability of teledentistry applications in comparison to non-telemedicine alternatives. A growing body of evidence supporting the efficacy of teledentistry is provided by some of the studies on pediatric dentistry, oral medicine, orthodontics and periodontics. The majority of the research in these areas reported that teledentistry had similar or better outcomes than the conventional alternative.”

“Survey results from 39 studies concluded that teledentistry provides a viable option for remote screening, diagnosis, consultation, treatment planning and mentoring. Rapidly developing information and communication technologies have increasingly shown improving cost effectiveness, accuracy and efficient remote assistance for clinicians.”