



HEALTH CARE ALLIANCE FOR PATIENT SAFETY

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Telehealth forum participants: Patient safety must remain utmost priority as technology evolves

Panelists suggest that adopting modern telehealth policies ought to be paired with a strong doctor-patient relationship

(WASHINGTON) – The Health Care Alliance for Patient Safety (Alliance) today held an event titled “Evolution of Telehealth: Patient Awareness and Education” in Washington, DC, in conjunction with The Hill. Speakers and panelists continually advocated for synchronizing modern telehealth practices with a strong doctor-patient relationship – a win-win for patients who would see an increase in health care access while also fostering better health outcomes.

“A bipartisan group of federal lawmakers, telehealth experts, and vision and health care professionals today made clear that even as technology makes us more connected, a strong doctor-patient relationship remains fundamental to treating existing medical ailments and improve health outcomes,” said Alliance Chairwoman Dr. Deanna Alexander, O.D. “The Alliance believes that increased usage of telemedicine can help increase access to healthcare, but technology must be used prudently and can’t be seen as a replacement for all in-person examinations and care.”

Panelists shared how regular consultation with a doctor is critically important to promoting patient health. In the vision health field, a staggering ninety-four percent of patients reported a change in their prescription since their last visit – meaning without a regular eye exam, the patient would have an incorrect prescription. Eye doctors can also determine over 270 underlying health conditions during an exam – like macular degeneration, diabetes, hypertension and glaucoma – making regular examinations crucial to preventative care.

Meanwhile, ill-advised online vision screenings increase the likelihood of poor-fitting lenses. A wrongly-fitted contact lens can cause blurred vision leading to blindness, open sores on the patient's eyes, and bacterial and viral infections that could lead to vision loss.

Further, in-person consultations can assist with educating patients on proper vision health practices. The Centers for Disease Prevention and Prevention (CDC) [has reported](#) the troubling frequency of dangerous practices related to improper contact lens care, all of which can lead negative health conditions:

- Fifty percent of patients wear contact lenses while sleeping
- Fifty-five percent of patients improperly add contact solution to their cases, instead of emptying the case and using new, clean solution
- Eighty-two percent of patients keep their contact lens cases longer than recommended

Event speakers included Congressman Buddy Carter (R-GA), Senator Bill Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA), Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA), Mr. Peter Menziuso, President of North America for Johnson & Johnson Vision, and Co-Chair of the Health Care Alliance for Patient Safety, Dr. David Cockrell, Owner of Cockrell Eyecare Center in Stillwater, Okla., Susan Polan, Associate Executive Director, Public Affairs & Advocacy, American Public Health Association, Natasa Sokolovich, Executive Director, Telehealth, University of Pittsburgh and Samantha Zenlea, Senior Regulatory Policy Specialist, National Council on Aging.

The Alliance was founded in 2018 to advocate for patient safety and to protect and defend the doctor-patient relationship – the essential foundation of personalized health care decision making. For more information, please visit www.PatientSafetyToday.com.

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