

March 24, 2020

Matthew Eyles  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
America's Health Insurance Plans  
601 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
South Building Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20004

120 South Riverside Plaza  
Suite 2000  
Chicago, Illinois 60606-6995  
800.877.1600

1120 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Suite 460  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Mr. Eyles:

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (the "Academy") supports the efforts of American's Health Insurance Plans to safeguard the health of patients and health care providers during the coronavirus outbreak. Representing more than 107,000 registered dietitian nutritionists,<sup>1</sup> nutrition and dietetic technicians, registered and advanced-degree nutritionists, the Academy is the largest association of nutrition and dietetics professionals in the United States. Our members provide medical and professional services in clinical and community settings, conduct significant research and are committed to improving the health of all Americans through the transformative power of food and nutrition.

The COVID-19 outbreak presents a watershed moment in the delivery of health care in the United States. For years, the U.S. has been paying the price for overlooking the importance of nutrition, both in preventing and in treating costly chronic conditions. Now more than ever, the Academy believes it is vital to ensure everyone has timely, continuous access to safe, effective nutrition services that can improve their health and manage their chronic diseases.

Registered dietitian nutritionists are recognized by the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine)<sup>2</sup> as the most qualified food and nutrition service providers. Studies show MNT provided by an RDN is linked to improved clinical outcomes and reduced costs related to physician's time, medication use and hospital admissions for people with obesity, diabetes and disorders of lipid metabolism, as well as other chronic diseases.<sup>3</sup>

Removing limitations to the provision of telehealth services strengthens provider capacity and facilitates access to medically necessary patient care, while avoiding COVID-19 transmission risks associated with in-person care. The Academy urges AHIP to recommend that private payers who are not already covering nutrition services provided via telehealth by registered

---

<sup>1</sup> The Academy approved the optional use of the credential "registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN)" by "registered dietitians (RDs)" to more accurately convey who they are and what they do as the nation's food and nutrition experts. The RD and RDN credentials have identical meanings and legal trademark definitions.

<sup>2</sup> Committee on Nutrition Services for Medicare Beneficiaries. "The Role of Nutrition in Maintaining Health in the Nation's Elderly: Evaluating Coverage of Nutrition Services for the Medicare Population." Washington, DC: Food and Nutrition Board, Institute of Medicine; January 1, 2000 (published).

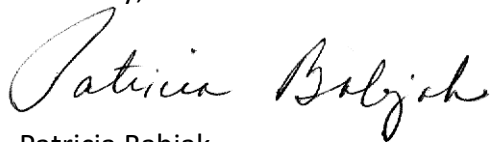
<sup>3</sup> Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Evidence Analysis Library. *Medical Nutrition Therapy Evidence Analysis Project 2008*. <http://www.andevidencelibrary.com/mnt>.

dietitian nutritionists immediately remove those limitations. We also urge you to recommend that these parties strengthen capacity by expanding their RDN provider networks through expedited enrollment processes and by asking any third-party telehealth vendors to do the same.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer solutions that facilitate access to care and improve health during this national emergency. The Academy shares your belief that “patients need expanded access to telehealth to ensure expanded access to care.” We look forward to working with you to ensure that the health and well-being of the people we serve remain a top priority.

Please contact Marsha Schofield, the Academy’s senior director of governance and nutrition services coverage, at 312/899-1762 or [mschofield@eatright.org](mailto:mschofield@eatright.org) with any questions or requests for additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Babjak". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Patricia Babjak  
Chief Executive Officer