

INTEGRIS is a pioneer in the field of telemedicine and has a 26 year history of using telecommunications technology to supply evidence-based health care to Oklahomans who lack access due to time or distance from physicians. Our organization was the first in the state to offer direct to consumer virtual visits starting January 2015. When we launched virtual visits, it is was and is paramount to comply with the federal definition of telemedicine:

"Telemedicine" means the practice of health care delivery, diagnosis, consultation, evaluation, and treatment, transfer of medical data, or exchange of medical education information by means of two-way, real-time interactive communication between the patient and physician. To be considered telemedicine the patient must be able to communicate in real-time with the offsite physician at the time the services are provided. Telemedicine is not a consultation provided by telephone, audio-only communication, e-mail, text or instant messaging conversation, website based questionnaire, non-secure video conference or facsimile machine.

For INTEGRIS Virtual Visit, our physicians and nurse practitioners adhere to evidence-based virtual care guidelines and protocols to ensure quality patient care. Without video, it is impossible to provide urgent primary care to patients who are being seen for the first time by one of our health care professionals.

Physical exam is dependent on visual inspection, which cannot be conducted by telephone only. There is a major distinction between audio only and audio plus video. If audio only, the health provider could miss the following:

- Level of distress of patient
- Anatomic malformations
- Motor skills of the patient
- Visual inspection of the patient
- Accuracy of patient identity

INTEGRIS Health has grave concerns about SB 726 for the following reasons:

- SB 726 redefines the establishment of the Physician Patient Relationship (PPR) in Title 59 Professions and Occupations. This bill focuses on a newly established physician-patient relationship.
- An out of state, for profit vendor, Teladoc, that has been under national scrutiny and involved in litigation with other states has provided aggressive lobbying and incomplete information to Oklahoma legislators.
- The vendor's platform is "audio-only" - meaning a physician will be allowed to diagnose and treat a patient based on a phone call.
- Another risk is reducing an initial visit to a phone call would monetize a 150 year old of communication to a telephone call, which is not telemedicine.

- SB 726 is not restricted to rural Oklahoma, which is the primary reason the vendor used to persuade the legislators.
- It should be noted that the vendor doesn't provide support for chronic disease management only acute care – not offering complete solution to underserved communities that would fragment and dilute medical care to Oklahomans with chronic diseases.
- The two bill authors rejected multiple bill amendments to help make it more relevant as a health care source.
- Information supplied by the vendor to bill authors has been incomplete and inaccurate as vetted by Oklahoma health care professionals from all major health care systems in Oklahoma as well as the Center for Telehealth and eHealth Law out of Washington D.C.

INTEGRIS Health respectfully asks Governor Fallin to veto SB 726 for the following reasons:

- Telephone only is not telemedicine, and it is not medicine.
- This bill allows for loop holes in the newly proposed language for audio (telephone only) only to be used as a modality for telemedicine for the initial encounter, which is not telemedicine.
- Telephone only will significantly lower the standard of care and is not representative of evidence-based medicine.
- Appropriate medical care and treatment depend on an accurate diagnosis and history of the patient. Physical exam is dependent on visual inspection, which cannot be conducted by telephone only.
- Ramifications could be life and death for Oklahomans who place trust in their care providers.

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**ACTION NEEDED:** Please call or email the Governor's office, asking her to VETO SB 726, as a risk to patient safety and the practice of quality medicine.

e-mails should be sent to Ashley Neel ([Ashley.Neel@omes.ok.gov](mailto:Ashley.Neel@omes.ok.gov)); the Governor's phone number is 521-2342. A letter can be hand-delivered to her office at the State Capitol, Room 212.