Health Care Practitioners To Provide Health Care Services Through Telemedicine

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New Jersey Telemedicine Legislation and the Expansion of Healthcare Access

This study includes the New Jersey Senate Bill that was introduced during the legislative session in 2015. This Senate Bill is mainly related to the field of 'Healthcare and nursing.' The main focus of this bill is on the safety, protection, health services, and welfare measures provided for the general public. This bill authorizes healthcare practitioners and professionals to ensure the availability of healthcare services by utilizing telemedicine and is titled Senate No. 2729 (S 2729) (Senate, No. 2729. State of New Jersey. 216 Legislature). In addition to that, this bill has the corresponding Assembly number A 4231.

The whole legislative process is considered complicated as it consists of different steps and procedures that successively allow a bill to become law. Originally, any General Assembly member or Senator may present a brand new law and be accredited as its official sponsor. However, it should be remembered that there are some significant players in the proposition and presentation of a new law, including national groups, political parties, different interest groups, public representatives, the citizens, and the governor. The legislator, at the time, first instructs the drafting of the bill. In addition to that, it is the right of the legislator to invite other legislators to participate in the whole process as co-sponsors.

During the legislative process, the introduction session is completed when the General Assembly or Senate Secretary Clerk distributes the number of the bill along with its title and main sponsor. The next step after the introduction of the bill is to forward it to a committee for amendments. This committee is responsible for all the possible improvements and modifications in the bill. The amendments committee also arranges meetings involving public discussion for the sake of evaluating the significance of the bill. If the committee of amendments approves the bill, then it is successively forwarded to the House for a second reading or further (advanced) edition.

After the step of advanced editing or modification, the bill is forwarded to the next step, where the General Assembly Speaker or Senate President arranges a proper schedule for the bill. During this step, the concerned official reads the bill for the third time. It is scheduled and arranged with the

main underlying purpose of voting and debate for any possible improvement. If the bill becomes successful in receiving the majority of the votes, it is labeled as 'passed.' If we sum the whole procedure up, the new bill must go through a series of steps before its final approval, which involves the first reading, consideration of the amendments committee, the second step of reading, the third reading, and the final assessment in the second House.

Legislative Approval, Gubernatorial Authority, and the Passage of the Bill

When the bill receives the approval of both Houses, it is forwarded for the signature of the Governor. However, it must be remembered that the Governor possesses the authority to reject the new bill. In such cases, the rejected new bill is termed a 'veto' (Libby, 2011). The most important thing is the approval of the new bill by both Houses, followed by the Governor's signature, which eventually makes the minor differences between the Assembly and Senate versions of the new bill less noteworthy. One of the differences includes the fact that in the Senate, the bill is presented by the Senator, who is also the sponsor of the bill, and on the other hand, assemblypersons present the new bill in the Assembly for the sake of consideration and approval.

This difference is also described as follows: "Every Assembly member is permitted the introduction of 30 bills in two years, and each Senator is permitted the introduction of 45 bills in the same period. However, there are multiple possible ways of managing this limitation" (Libby, 2011, p. 70). The important point to remember is that the contents of Senate and Assembly bills are the same, but they differ in their quantities (Libby, 2011). The next most important and significant thing to discuss is the rationale for the choice of the specific bill. Without proper and considerable reasoning, it seems entirely useless and pointless to go through the whole process of legislation.

Senate Bill 2729 of the year 2015, under discussion, comprises a very discrete and significant rationale. This Senate bill plays a substantial role in the overall service and functioning of the healthcare profession. This bill ensures that the statutory authority for a large number of healthcare professionals holds the responsibility and concern of delivering healthcare services to patients by utilizing telemedicine and ensuring the good quality of the provided services.

Healthcare Professionals and the Scope of Telemedical Practice

The healthcare professionals and practitioners include physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, neurologists, cardiologists, nephrologists, radiologists, pathologists, urologists, nurses and licensed clinical professionals, and other medical staff workers. According to the bill under discussion, "this particular sanction would also involve mental health screeners, who, according to the bill, would be

permitted to be involved in the screening procedures of mental health by utilizing telemedicine without the necessitation of a waiver from already existing rules" (Legislative Fiscal Estimate Senate, No. 2729).

If we talk in general, this particular bill supports the practice and provision of healthcare services on a remote basis. It does this by establishing a bona fide and honest relationship between the patients and healthcare providers. This fact successively makes this legislation important enough to positively impact the general public by working for their protection, health improvement, and welfare. To clear the whole concept, one should be familiar with the concept of telemedicine. Telemedicine refers to "the delivery or provision of any healthcare service by utilization of electronic media and communication services, information technology or any other technological or electronic means."

Telemedicine operates to fill in the difference or gap between the patient located at a distant place and the healthcare provider located at another distant place. In this way, a healthcare provider located at one site and a patient located at another remote site can communicate with or with the help of an intervening healthcare provider (HCP) (Legislative Fiscal Estimate Senate, No. 2729). There are multiple benefits to the utilization of telemedicine.

Diagnosis, Treatment, and the Clinical Benefits of Remote Care

Some of these benefits include the modified level of efficacy in the provision of proper diagnosis and treatment options, improved access to healthcare-related information, higher and improved degree of productivity and delivery of availabilities, modified level of professional education and information, effective position of marketing, improved quality control and maintenance of screening processes as well as a marked reduction in the cost of healthcare assistance (Hjelm, 2005). All of these benefits improve the whole healthcare domain's efficacy available in remote areas, as well as increase trust in healthcare provider-patient relations.

In addition, the relationship between the healthcare provider or practitioner and the patients is improved by the use of different technologies of telecommunication, including store-and-forward technology, video conferencing, telephone calls, and many others. The use of telecommunication services makes the user feel and perceive that they can reach out to the other person even if they are not capable of communicating with each other physically. By using these methods, patients presenting with immediate complications in remote areas do not lose their lives or remain at risk, as they can save themselves through telecommunication and telemedicine.

That is why this bill has gained wide acceptance and received high-level discussion from the majority of healthcare providers and professionals. Through the implementation of this bill and the use of telecommunication and telemedicine, not only has the relationship between different healthcare professionals and patients improved, but it has also imposed a huge effect on the quality

management and control of healthcare services. The implementation of this particular bill and the use of telemedicine ensure modified quality management and control of public health services.

Cost Efficiency and the Reduction of Barriers for Patients

Moreover, it also has a positive effect on the cost efficiency of the delivery and provision of health services. It becomes easier, less costly, and more effective for a patient sitting in a remote area to communicate with a healthcare practitioner located at the other point. Every good healthcare practitioner considers it one of their foremost duties and responsibilities to use new and advanced technological innovations that are easy to reach and more affordable for the general public. It must be considered that it is one of the first duties of any healthcare provider (HCP) to use as many new options and methods as possible to ensure the availability of quality health services to patients in need.

If we focus on the other side of this bill or legislation that includes its possible limitations, then they are highly insignificant or much less important. It is because this legislation holds the main benefit of improving the quality and trust of the healthcare provider-patient relationship. The same fact makes the limitations of this legislation much less important or worth mentioning. The main underlying reason and goal of the development of this legislation is the fact that the quality of healthcare services has to be improved, and the difficulties that healthcare professionals have to face because of the unavailability of telemedicine networks and services must be overcome.

However, like everything, this bill also holds some limitations. One of those limitations is the misuse of telecommunication services. This includes “a loss of connection or alliance between different healthcare practitioners and issues or problems related to organization and quality of healthcare services information as well as bureaucratic problems” (Hjelm, 2005, p. 60). However, these disadvantages are more of a risk than a proper negative point. The advantages and benefits of this bill are significant, potent, and pretty evident overall.

Legal Flexibility and the Case for Broad Telemedicine Authorization

In addition to that, the bill does not provide any restrictions that could impose a negative effect on the provision of healthcare services. Considering the importance of this bill, the delivery process of healthcare services should be properly licensed. A copy of the financial statement is also attached to the real bill statement. The financial impact statement is important because telecommunication and telemedicine services require proper financial resources to supply and provide healthcare services and equipment.

Furthermore, in my view, this bill holds great importance regarding the efficiency of the whole healthcare system, organization, management, and supply of its services to the general public. It is because this bill is mainly aimed at the provision of health services to the general public by remotely located healthcare providers through the use of telecommunication methods. The problem of not being able to provide healthcare services to people living in rural and distant areas from well-developed cities has remained a major limitation regarding the effectiveness of the healthcare management system and quality assurance.

The implementation of this bill brings great hope of improving the quality and service of the healthcare system by filling in the distance and gap between health professionals and the general public. The use of telemedicine has increased significantly because of its obvious benefits and positive outcomes. It has now become one of the easiest solutions to problems of unreachable distances and complications.

Stakeholder Interests and the Politics of Healthcare Legislation

Moreover, an important and significant aspect that should be discussed is how the stakeholders can view the legislation processes. For example, two important stakeholders, including the New Jersey Nurses Association and School Nurses Association, are significant in the case and are also responsible for protecting the legislation process and helping to assist in the implementation process of the bill. The bill is available to develop the work of stakeholders and consumers at all levels. Due to effective communication with stakeholders, it is estimated that telemedicine is significant and has a high value in the area of healthcare. The stakeholders who were interviewed in this regard presented the idea that the bill should be implemented in different types of telemedicine network patterns to promote the effectiveness of national health and healthcare systems. Research studies suggested that telemedicine education is a vast and important area that will increase its worth with time and spread in the education system. Moreover, studies suggested that it could be possible that telemedicine will be a part of the teaching curriculum, and the professionals of the healthcare system will develop their knowledge in this regard with the highest quality (Hjelm, 2005, p. 66).

The last and most significant factor is how this legislation will positively or negatively impact nurses and their field. The nurses will have an impact on the legislation because they are a worthy part of the healthcare system. The nurses are the ones who provide their services to the doctors as well as to the patients. Telenursing is the term that is used to define the relationship between the nursing area and telemedicine. Nurses will need to be able to improve their work system by using this technology and develop their communication measures so that they can deal with patients in the best manner. According to the studies, nurses are a significant element of the healthcare system and will help to promote the measures of telemedicine, including its planning, implementation, and management process (Ganapathy & Ravindra, 2011, p. 48).

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