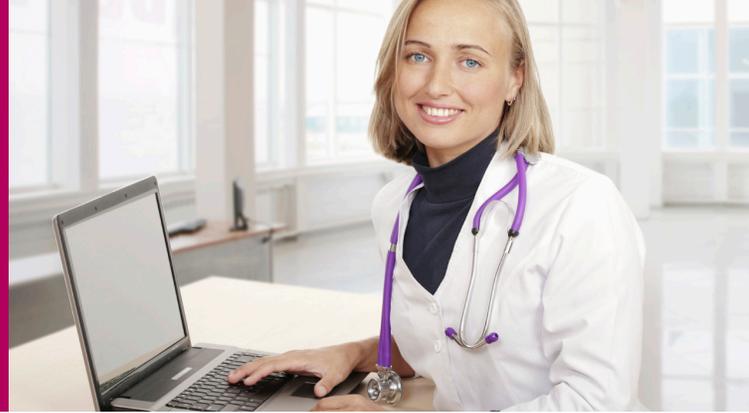


HIGH SPEED INTERNET

AND HEALTH CARE



OVERVIEW

The potential for using high speed Internet technology to help expand access and quality of health care in the United States is enormous. The use of advanced communications technology to transmit medical data and imaging in real-time, while linking patients to providers for direct consultation, removes geographical barriers and allows people to receive the medical care they need when and where it's needed.

In the face of rising medical costs and increasing gaps in insurance coverage, the cost-cutting efficiencies of telemedicine – the delivery of quality health-related services and information using telecommunications technologies - are more valuable than ever. Universal high speed Internet access would help bring the prospect of affordable and quality health care for all Americans closer to reality.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

To make the practice of telemedicine possible nationally requires a commitment to pay for health services delivered to the point of need. While this may require an investment in both medical and communications infrastructure, studies show the savings of telemedicine will far outweigh costs. Improvements in both access to care and the quality of care delivered will be immediate. Legal issues including rules that prevent consultations across state lines must be addressed in order for some telemedicine services to be available nationwide. Before the full potential of telemedicine can be realized, high-speed two-way Internet lines must be made universally available.

BENEFITS OF HIGH SPEED INTERNET

- Real-time transmission of medical imagery enables

the interpretation of MRI, ultrasound, X-rays, and other diagnostic procedures to be performed remotely.

- The number of strenuous patient transfers, such as from a nursing home to a doctor's office, or for expectant mothers seeking prenatal care from a distant hospital, can be significantly reduced through remote monitoring and online consultations only possible through a high speed Internet connection.
- A study from the University of Texas Medical Branch estimates that the U.S. health care system can save \$4.28 billion from the elimination of patient transfers alone. This benefit of high speed Internet does not include the potential savings from remote monitoring or interpretative services.
- High speed Internet allows physicians to connect with distant specialists for real-time guidance in emergency situations, potentially saving lives by eliminating the delay of long ambulance rides when seconds count, such as during a stroke or heart attack.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Substantial investment in the research and development of existing and new telemedicine applications and techniques.
- The deployment and adoption of two-way high speed Internet networks capable of reliable and secure transmission of medical imaging and data should be encouraged.
- Policy makers focus on delivering one gigabyte of capacity to institutions that anchor our communities – libraries, schools and hospitals – so that all Americans will benefit from the build out of a high speed broadband infrastructure.

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