

2021 ACR TOP POLICY PRIORITIES

AMERICAN COLLEGE
of RHEUMATOLOGY
Empowering Rheumatology Professionals

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U.S. Congress

- **Advocate for appropriate Medicare reimbursement related to rheumatology and cognitive specialties**, including protecting evaluation and management (E/M) payment updates implemented in January 2021 and continued improvements, as well as protecting against cuts to reimbursements in the physician fee schedule (PFS).
- **Streamline the prior authorization process** in Medicare in hopes that effective policy changes in this program could be adopted by private payers.
- **Support expansion of the rheumatology workforce** through loan repayment support, adequate Graduate Medical Education funding, permanently repealing the cap on Medicare funding for training slots, and supporting International Medical Graduates seeking to expand the American medical workforce.
- **Expand access to telemedicine** by preserving parity for audio-only visits and advocating for logistical support and resources for providers and patients adding this to their healthcare experience.
- **Ensure drug pricing legislation expands patient access to treatments** by reducing the cost of the treatment to the patient without restricting the ability of rheumatologists and their healthcare team to provide treatments safely. Work for congressional oversight as a stopgap for any overly expansive drug pricing models (e.g., Most Favored Nation, Part B demo) developed by agencies.
- **Increase targeted research funding** through the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), add arthritis to the diseases specifically receiving funding through the Department of Defense Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program and support impactful NIH funding.
- **Secure provider financial solvency and additional practice support** during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Federal Agencies

- **Ensure the continuation and refinement of E/M reimbursement** that reflects the importance and value of cognitive care specialties.
- **Advocate for appropriate policies to address high drug costs.** Policies should be focused on the underlying cause of high pharmaceutical costs without hindering a provider's ability to administer necessary treatments or the patient's access to life-altering medication.
- **Support expansion of telemedicine** as a supplemental tool to ensure access to rheumatologic care. Policies must include appropriate reimbursement for telehealth visits, continued flexibilities for the site of service requirements, and telemedicine platforms that allow for an informed consent mechanism and ensure appropriate safety protocols.
- **Advocate for guardrails for the use of utilization management tools** such as prior authorization. This includes streamlined documentation requirements for prior authorization in an electronic format and minimizing prior authorizations for routinely approved medications.
- **Ensure transparency related to drug pricing**, including methods used to determine the cost of drugs and making public any negotiated rates or incentives between pharmaceutical manufacturers, insurance companies, and pharmaceutical benefit managers (PBMs).

State Governments

- **Implement guardrails in prior authorization and step therapy policies** in state regulated health plans, and work to prohibit non-medical switching, to ensure providers and patients are able to choose patients' medications.
- **Advocate for greater telemedicine access** and reimbursement parity. Work to resolve inter-state and licensing issues arising from cross-border telemedicine use.
- **Increase PBM and drug pricing transparency** by supporting proposals with robust reporting requirements for rebates and drug price increases.
- **Expand the rheumatology workforce** by encouraging states to include rheumatology professionals in loan repayment programs, talent retention programs, and other workforce initiatives.
- **Advocate for the elimination of copay accumulator policies** in state regulated health plans.