

March 24, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

The members of the Endocrine Society appreciate the swift actions already taken by Congress and the Administration to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The Endocrine Society is the world's largest professional organization of endocrinologists, representing the interests of over 18,000 physicians and scientists engaged in the treatment and research of endocrine disorders, including diabetes, cancer, obesity, osteoporosis, thyroid disease, and infertility. Our members are continuing to provide care to vulnerable patients with these complex, chronic conditions that place them at higher risk during this public health emergency. We write today to urge you to take additional steps to protect their health at this time.

As Congress finalizes the contents of the third COVID-19 stimulus package, the Society implores you to consider including the following provisions that will protect our patients by ensuring that vulnerable patients with endocrine disorders can remain in their homes where they will not be exposed to the virus.

- **Reauthorize the Special Diabetes Program (SDP) through FY 2021.** A top priority for the Society is funding the SDP, which includes the Special Type 1 Program that provides funding for NIH research and the Special Diabetes Program for Indians that furnishes diabetes education and prevention programs for American Indians and Alaska Natives. These programs advance our understanding of diabetes and help develop new therapies to improve patients' quality of life. The SDP's latest short-term extension is set to expire on May 22. We recognize that the COVID-19 relief packages currently under consideration in the House and Senate both extend the SDP's authorization. **The Society urges you to adopt the provision included in the Senate's Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act that extends the SDP through FY 2021.**



- **Eliminate the requirement for an in-office visit every three months for patients with insulin pumps.** The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has taken important steps to ensure that face-to-face interactions between Medicare beneficiaries are minimized. However, patients using insulin pumps to control their diabetes are required to see their endocrinologist every three months to manage their condition and make any changes to their insulin pump settings. These patients are at higher risk should they contract COVID-19, and therefore, **the Society recommends that Congress direct CMS to suspend this requirement for an in-person visit and allow that it be replaced with a telehealth visit during this and future public health emergencies.**
- **Provide patients with a 90-day supply of diabetes test strips.** Some insurers, including Medicare and Medicaid, only cover a 30-day supply of diabetes test strips. Medicare used to provide a greater supply, which reassured patients that their test strip supply was secure during times like this. **The Society urges Congress to direct Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurers to cover a 90-day supply of these strips during a public health emergency to prevent these vulnerable patients from unnecessary exposure to COVID-19.**
- **Eliminate patient cost sharing for insulin.** As Congress is well aware, spiraling insulin costs have created a dangerous barrier between many people with diabetes and this lifesaving treatment. Individuals with diabetes must maintain their medication regimen to avoid unnecessary hospitalizations and complications, but the rising cost of insulin has already made this difficult for many individuals. Therefore, **the Society urges you to eliminate patient cost sharing for insulin during this public health emergency.** Many Americans have already lost their jobs and many who still are able to work are concerned about reductions in their income. Individuals dependent on insulin cannot ration this medication without risking their lives or becoming sicker and putting more pressure on our health system at this time.

Thank you again for all that you are doing to support patients and providers during this difficult time and for considering these additional policy recommendations.

E. Dale Abel MD Ph.D.
President- Endocrine Society