

JACK M. GINDI, MD, FACP

Internal Medicine

March 14, 2020

## **COVID-19 UPDATE AND FEE STRUCTURE CHANGE**

### **To all of my patients through these trying times:**

I know you are all keeping up on the ever changing landscape of the present COVID-19 virus pandemic.

I hope you are all hunkering down and heeding the public health recommendations regarding social distancing, frequent hand washing/sanitizing, disinfecting your surroundings, keeping hands away from face (I find this an especially difficult habit to break), and keeping well hydrated/keeping mouth and throat moist. Perhaps most importantly, we need to be especially vigilant at keeping up all the healthy nutritional, exercise/movement, sleep, stress management (tough one), and general lifestyle habits that we have discussed during your routine checkups.

As many of you know, I do my best to keep the office as protected and germ free an environment as possible. In this regard, I ask that you please call ahead before coming in to the office if you are experiencing any of the following symptoms: cough, sore throat, fever, shortness of breath, headache, malaise (general feeling of being unwell), generalized muscle and/or joint achiness, diarrhea, or any other unusual or uncertain symptoms.

Even with runny nose or nasal/sinus congestion symptoms that are much more suggestive of a "common cold" upper respiratory infection or allergies, please call ahead. We will advise and triage accordingly, so that we continue to minimize risk to other patients, office staff, and the community at large.

In these challenging times, I am handling more and more medical questions and issues over the phone. As the pandemic increases, I foresee more demand for "telemedicine" evaluations by phone, FaceTime, Zoom, Skype, etc.

These phone/telemedicine intakes require a good deal of our time and energy. Beyond the direct person to person time between you and me, these encounters often trigger additional ancillary work including: medication changes, authorizations and pharmacy contacts/consultations; phone consultations with and/or referrals to other providers; insurance questions/authorizations; letters of medical necessity and documentation regarding work, travel, etc.; fact finding searches of varied questions and problems that arise; and other unforeseen bureaucracies.

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To sustain my present fee for service business model, I can no longer perform all of the above services free of charge. I will therefore be asking for reimbursement for these services based on the time and complexity of each encounter (similar to how we base office visit charges).

My plan presently is to have four levels of fees for these phone/telemedicine encounters, from level one being of lower time and complexity to level four being very complex and time intensive. Associated fees for level 1 to 4 services will be \$150, \$300, \$450, and \$600 respectively.

I do not want you to ever feel hesitant calling our office. Unscheduled calls to the office or call backs from me or my office staff will not be charged, unless I inform you otherwise during the call.

I anticipate insurance reimbursement for such telemedicine encounters will be minimal to nonexistent, but we will look into CPT/ICD coding options for these services.

This is a work in progress and subject to change as all of us adjust to this rapidly changing pandemic with many unknowns and uncertainties.

As always, I wish you all the best of health and wellness through these difficult and uncharted times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jack M. Gindi', with a stylized, flowing script.

Jack M. Gindi, MD