**The AMA Publishes Principles for mHealth apps and Digital Health Tools**

Recently, the AMA adopted a number of principles on mHealth apps and other digital health tools to explain payment policies, health coverage and its efforts to support mHealth platforms. Though many people advocate the benefits associated with such apps, AMA also raises awareness about the potential health and safety risks these apps can expose their patients to, in addition to privacy risks.

When devising the principles in support of mHealth apps and devices usage, AMA has encouraged the adaptation of innovation and restated its positions on roles of licensure laws, physicians, and need for evidence. mHealth apps and other digital health tools can challenge these positions.

Following are the principles devised by AMA:

* Support the establishment or continuation of a valid patient-physician relationship;
* Have a clinical evidence base to support their use in order to ensure mHealth app safety and effectiveness;
* Follow evidence-based practice guidelines, to the degree they are available, to ensure patient safety, quality of care and positive health outcomes;
* Support care delivery that is patient-centered, promotes care coordination and facilitates team-based communication;
* Support data portability and interoperability in order to promote care coordination through medical home and accountable care models;
* Abide by state licensure laws and state medical practice laws and requirements in the state in which the patient receives services facilitated by the app;
* Require that physicians and other health practitioners delivering services through the app be licensed in the state where the patient receives services, or be providing these services as otherwise authorized by that state’s medical board; and
* Ensure that the delivery of any services via the app be consistent with state scope of practice laws.

Since physicians are now increasingly using mHealth apps and other digital tools for patient care and consultation, AMA had to state its position on the use of such tools. The AMA has addressed two important issues i.e. safety and data protection. Firstly, safety is a matter of key concern especially after Congress limited the authority of FDA to regulate mHealth apps with the 21st Century Cures Act. With physicians being less clear on the effectiveness and safety of digital health tools, an industry-based approach for reviewing mHealth apps is the only way to clarify safety issues. Secondly, AMA principles serve to guide physicians about data privacy issues arising out of mHealth apps. AMA maintains that physicians need to alert patients about these potential privacy concerns.

This publication is an important reminder of the existence on these issues and it will be a matter of time to know what impact this position of the AMA will have on the industry.