

Wyoming Telehealth Network

August 2021 WyTN Spotlight

Ann Mond Johnson, CEO, American Telemedicine Association



This year will mark the first-ever annual Telehealth Awareness Week from September 19-25, 2021, hosted by the American Telemedicine Association (ATA). The Wyoming Telehealth Network is excited to learn about how to help our colleagues participate in Wyoming. We recently caught up with Ann Mond Johnson, the CEO of the ATA, to learn more about how this event came to be and what we can expect from the week of awareness.

Ann Mond Johnson came to the ATA in 2018 with a background in launching, building, and leading client-driven companies that have been innovators in using healthcare technology and data to support consumers using healthcare. Her vision of empowering healthcare consumers to make the best choice they can is amplified by the growth in telemedicine. “I think telemedicine is the epitome of consumerism in healthcare because patients can receive it when and where they need it.”

Ann’s leadership as CEO of ATA came as the ATA was celebrating its 25th year. She claims that she is more excited now about telemedicine than she was back then and with good reason—telemedicine has exponentially gained ground in the current landscape shaped by COVID-19. She explains, “To see the work that our members did during this pandemic is incredible. They were innovative and collaborative on the front lines to make sure the healthcare system didn’t collapse under the weight of the situation.”

An ability to inspire and lead diverse teams has helped Ann build a broad and collaborative group of partners who are addressing how to advance access to telehealth and ensuring that people get care when and where they need it, safely and affordably, to improve their lives. Addressing social

determinants of health like access to broadband, she believes, may be easier to solve for than other points of equity because there are other factors impacting connectivity including affordability of cell plans, access to the right device, digital and healthcare literacy. Simply having access to broadband is just the tip of the iceberg. She explains there are more issues tied to telehealth access including provider bias that must be addressed to improve access. After all, if a patient feels judged for their socioeconomic status, identity, appearance or other circumstance during their healthcare appointment, they are unlikely to be honest about the healthcare issues they are facing and will therefore not receive the quality of treatment they are seeking.

Further, regulations must be modernized such as geographic locations and originating site fees. With more than 400 member organizations including health care delivery leaders, academic medical centers, payers and telehealth solution providers, the ATA connects the expertise of its members to identify policy opportunities and address telehealth myths through research and thought leadership. Ann explains that telehealth can help keep patient care effective and efficient if providers are open to it. She says, "So much can be accomplished through a phone call or video appointment." The most important thing to remember is to ensure your platform is HIPPA-secured.

[Telehealth Awareness Week](#) is an exciting opportunity because, as Ann explains, it is a chance to showcase that telehealth is health. Telehealth is an effective modality that providers can use at their judgement to extend access and do more good for more people. This is a moment in time when telehealth is being embraced at the local, state and federal level. It is a tool that must remain in the toolbox to further equitable access to healthcare during a pandemic and beyond. That means we must ensure that we continue to expand access to telehealth and enable state legislatures to grow telehealth so we don't go over the federal telehealth cliff.

Ann gave two concrete ways to be involved in Telehealth Awareness week in addition the ways the [Wyoming Telehealth Network](#) is promoting. These included:

Tell your story! Wyomingites must make sure their voices are heard so legislators and regulators know that access to telehealth is important.

Let your [decision makers](#) know that the waivers and relaxation of rules during the Public Health Emergency need to stay in place.

Ann finished by emphasizing how important it is to get the word out so we avoid falling off the telehealth cliff federally. She says, "Remember that telehealth is health."