

GLENN GROTHMAN
6TH DISTRICT, WISCONSIN

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM



UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

24 WEST PIONEER ROAD
FOND DU LAC, WI 54935
(920) 907-0624

1427 LONGWORTH BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-2476

GROTHMAN.HOUSE.GOV

The Honorable Seema Verma
Administrator
Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services
200 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Administrator Verma,

I am contacting you regarding expanding Medicare coverage of testing for vitamin D deficiencies. As you may know, over the past several months there has been an increasing body of evidence indicating low vitamin D levels may be associated with increased COVID-19 cases, severity of symptoms, and mortality. Vitamin D has long been associated with a healthy immune system, particularly when combatting viral and respiratory infections. It remains unclear whether having healthy vitamin D levels can prevent someone from contracting COVID-19, however, it is evident that maintaining adequate vitamin D levels can drastically improve patients' outcomes while infected.

Several higher education institutions and medical research teams have examined the connection between vitamin D and COVID-19 since the onset of the pandemic. In April, Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, and Northwestern University produced two of the first studies showing a correlation between vitamin D deficiencies and increased likelihood of developing severe symptoms or complications from COVID-19. In September, University of Chicago Medicine completed a study indicating similar trends between vitamin D deficiencies and susceptibility to severe COVID-19 infection. Professors at Harvard Medical School and University of Boston Medicine have also publicly commented on the strong correlation between vitamin D deficiencies and COVID-19 complications while highlighting vitamin D's overall health benefits, specifically in regard to respiratory health.

This correlation has been observed by multiple medical teams in Europe as well. In late October, as part of a study in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism, researchers looked at 216 COVID-19 patients in a hospital in Spain. Over 80 percent of patients were deficient in vitamin D and those with lower vitamin D levels had longer hospital stays and higher inflammatory markers within their lungs. More recently, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's leading infectious disease expert, noted earlier this fall that he takes vitamin D supplements to maintain a healthy immune system and would encourage others to do so. Studies show over 40 percent of

American adults have inadequate levels of vitamin D with elderly individuals, those over the age of 65, and Hispanic and African American communities exhibiting the most severe deficiencies.

It is my understanding that vitamin D tests are only covered by Medicare in the event a doctor orders the test and deems it medically necessary due to a specific medical condition the patient may have. Given the evidence presented and studies conducted throughout the current pandemic I believe CMS should evaluate whether Vitamin D testing should be included in Welcome to Medicare visits and Medicare Annual visits. Vitamin D deficiencies can pose a major health risk, especially for those over the age of 65. In order to improve overall immune and respiratory health I believe vitamin D tests should be covered and incorporated into annual visits as a preventative measure. In doing so, we may be able to protect more seniors from respiratory infection and complications due to COVID-19. Thank you for your consideration, I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Glenn Gutman". The signature is written in a cursive style and is contained within a light blue rectangular border.