

AARC/SDSRC PACT Meeting
March 18, 2015 - Washington, DC

We first met at the Sunrise Breakfast with Senator John Thune, Congresswoman Kristi Noem and Senator Mike Rounds. This was basically a photo op. We had our picture taken and Char was thoroughly impressed by how well all of them knew Carleen. She did not have to introduce herself. They all knew exactly what we were here for because of her previous meetings with them. Char did turn around before the picture and inform Congresswoman Kristi Noem that we had not heard from her office yet about scheduling an appointment and she told us who to contact to schedule an appointment. We had the appointment set up in just a few minutes with one her aides.

Our first meeting was with Dennis D'Aquila and Colleen Leners. They are health aides of Senator John Thune. Colleen is an Advanced Practice RN doing a Health Policy Fellowship with the Senator. They were very open to talking about the Medicare Telehealth Parity Act. Colleen's firm understanding of the medical field greatly helped us in this first meeting. Colleen is interested in a 3 year readmission study that was done in our state and urged us to have this study published. At her request, this study will be published with help from the AARC. They requested that we follow up with them once we get this study published and once any legislation moves forward on this Act. Colleen did reveal to us that she feels that an RT would also make a great Fellow to go with the Senator.

Our second meeting was with Peter Eckrich from Senator Mike Rounds office. Peter was very interested in this Act as well. He did inform us that Senator Rounds looks at every piece of paper that comes through their office and reads it on his own. He forms his own opinion and is not easily influenced by people from the Democratic or Republican Party.

Our final meeting was with Matthew Hittle at Congresswoman Kristi Noem's office. Matt had very little understanding about what an RT does. We explained to him the capabilities of a RT and how an RT could benefit our patients in rural SD, who otherwise would not have access to a RT. He had quite a few questions about what this would actually look like in reality in a patient's home. We shared information about telehealth and some of our personal experiences with telehealth.

I, Char, would like to personally thank you for sending me as your PACT Representative and giving me this opportunity. It was an amazing experience. It really showed me that RTs can make a difference when we all band together as a state society and a national society with one goal in mind.

I, Carleen, want to thank the SDSRC for sending Char with me to team up and visit our Congressional Delegation. I felt a lot safer traveling the Metro subway with a teammate. I also want to thank all of you that sent emails in support of the Medicare Telehealth Parity Act. We had 211 total emails sent which put us at 23rd among the other states. That is 70 activists that took it upon themselves to sit down and show support for this legislation. We have over 400 licensed RTs in SD. I am always very proud to represent the RTs of South Dakota. Thanks again for allowing me to have this great opportunity!

Respectfully submitted,

Char Raley and Carleen Waltner