



## AMERICA'S ESSENTIAL HOSPITALS

July 2015

### Essential Hospitals Are National Leaders in Telehealth

Members of America's Essential Hospitals are leading the way in telehealth initiatives and innovations. Telehealth is the "broad variety of technologies and tactics to deliver virtual medical, health and education services. Telehealth is not a specific service, but a collection of means to enhance care and education delivery."<sup>1</sup>

Essential hospitals are dedicated to caring for the vulnerable, and telehealth allows them to more broadly meet this commitment for people who otherwise would lack access to high-quality health care. Telehealth allows many essential hospitals, particularly state academic medical centers, to reach populations across an entire state or region.

#### Project ECHO

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Project ECHO is a groundbreaking telehealth initiative by the University of New Mexico that originally responded to the state's growing hepatitis C problem. The program uses telehealth to train rural primary care physicians to treat a variety of conditions typically outside their scope. Project ECHO also organizes primary care physicians into a network, allowing them to communicate with and learn from each other, and to share ideas and challenges.

After the program initially saw significant success, it spread to include many sites within New Mexico, and eventually across the United States. Essential hospitals, including the University of Utah, the University of Chicago Medicine, UW Medicine, and the University of California, Davis, are now Project ECHO hubs, allowing them to improve health care

across their regions through telehealth. The project now provides support and learning for 30 diseases and conditions, supporting patient care in 22 states.

#### Mountaineer Doctor Television (MDTV)

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West Virginia United Health System's MDTV provides urgent and outpatient services to rural West Virginians through telehealth. MDTV is an independent telehealth network that provides care and video conferencing to numerous clinics throughout West Virginia, allowing patients access to health care without leaving their home towns.

Since its start in 1993, MDTV has provided more than 20,000 telemedicine consultations, including pediatrics, telestroke, and nephrology. The program also offers telepsychiatry in 30 clinics for children, adolescents, and adults, including those with addiction-related issues. The telepsychiatry program has expanded to include education of rural clinic providers and psychiatry residents. Additional expansion is planned for nursing homes and rural schools.

#### Missouri Telehealth Network (MTN)

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MTN comprises more than 150 sites across Missouri that connect rural Missouri residents to clinicians at the University of Missouri Health System, in Columbia. The program uses live, interactive videoconferencing for physician consultations, remote monitoring for home health and intensive care programs, and store-and-forward technology for the capture and later analysis of images, such as X-rays and computerized tomography (CT) scans.

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<sup>1</sup> Center for Connected Health Policy. National Telehealth Policy Resource Center. <http://cchpca.org/what-is-telehealth>. Accessed July 2015.

MTN also partnered with the Language Access Metro Project (LAMP) to better provide remote health care access to Missouri patients who do not speak English. The partnership connects patients and physicians with interpreters of 25 languages.

## WWAMI

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WWAMI is a 40-year-old, five-state alliance dedicated to improving health care access and educating medical professionals to work in rural environments in participating states: Washington, Wyoming, Alaska, Montana, and Idaho. Seattle's UW Medicine, the only medical school in the alliance, offers various telehealth services, including telestroke, telepain, and telepsychiatry, and also participates in Project ECHO.

In addition, the alliance offers medical education and workforce training for students at UW Medicine through telehealth across the five states. Students remain in their home state for the first year of medical school and take classes through video teleconferencing. During the second year of medical school, students take classes on UW Medicine's campus, and spend the third and fourth years engaged in clinical rounds across the five states, using UW Medicine's telehealth educational resources.

## Learn More

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Learn more about how essential hospitals embrace innovative technologies and care strategies to improve the health of all patients, including the vulnerable. Visit [essentialhospitals.org](https://essentialhospitals.org) or contact us at [GOV.admin@essentialhospitals.org](mailto:GOV.admin@essentialhospitals.org) or 202-585-0100.