

Advanced Practice Clinicians and the use of Technology in Rural Health!

Rural clinics and hospitals nationwide are experiencing a severe shortage of primary care MDs. Here are some of the current stats concerning primary care MDs and the future:

- Nationwide >90,000 by 2020, 130,000 by 2025
- We educate 5300/year in the US.....half go to 6 states!!!
- Only 1% will work in a community of 10,000 or less
- Recruiting harder is not going to work.....need a new approach
- New approach is reliance on Advanced Practice Nurse Practitioners (APNP) to provide primary care in rural communities

A major job stress for the APNP is the lack of physician support for managing acutely ill and medically complex patients. Dr. John Almquist has been leading an enthusiastic Telemedicine team at Ministry Health Care – Wisconsin. The goal is to close the gap and provide safe quality personalized care to rural healthcare facilities utilizing telemedicine.

Telemedicine allows patients to receive care by a medical specialist, who may be located in another city or area of the state, without having to travel to see them in person. Patients experience real-time visits with medical professionals using telemedicine. The telemedicine cart is designed with a real time audio/video link and supports exam tools so the specialist can see, talk with and examine patients.

Luke Menet, NP at Our Lady of Victory in Stanley, WI shared that patients want to stay in their local community. He stated, "Often the patient will say that it is amazing and they did not realize that this type of technology was available." Luke explained every admission gets a telemedicine consult within 24 hours. As a Nurse Practitioner this technology allows him to practice independently and he is able to meet all the admission requirements with the use of telemedicine. Luke stated, "We care for many patients in their 80s and 90s. They want to be close to home and have people caring for them that they are familiar with.

Karyn Nitz, RN shared that patients in Stanley would have to drive 40-60 miles to get the same healthcare that they are able to get locally with the use of telemedicine. Karyn stated, "Many of the people in our community do not have the money for gas or access to resources for a ride. I had one patient that did not go to a dietary consult about 35 miles from here because of the cost to travel there. I remember another patient that had her driver's license revoked because she had seizures. The patient was able to walk or ride her bike here and be seen with the use of telemedicine." Our Lady of Victory is investigating the possibility of using telemedicine for dietary consultants.

The team has developed telemedicine resources. A patient education video and handout were developed. It is available on Ministry external webpage to allow access to patients and family members from their home.

- Click on the link to access the patient/family education resources.
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/kaAJv8MBxMM> Resources for providers and associates are located on Ministry's internal webpage.
- Here is a similar video that is geared to provider and associate education
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcaPNNuxnjE&feature=youtu.be>