



Why is telemedicine important to ECMC?

ECMC gives exceptional care to our patients; however, there are times when a patient needs to see a specialist that is not locally available. We developed our telemedicine program to meet the needs of these rural Kansas patients.

Some of the patients utilizing our telemed program include:

- Cancer patients that are weak and travel is a hardship.
- Patients, or family members of patients, that work and have a hard time taking time off to travel to the specialist.
- Patients that would need to travel 8 hours to seek the specialized care they need.

How our patients feel about telemedicine:

- After a telemedicine visit an elderly patient stated, "Wow, it's just like the physician is in the room!"
- *"To Whom it May Concern,*

My wife and I live in rural Kansas (Ellsworth) and have 3 children ages 14, 11, and 9. My middle son Benjamin was diagnosed with developmental delay at age 3 and has struggled with learning delays and social anxieties ever since. We decided to seek assistance of a psychologist and psychiatrist to assist our son with his issues. Since we have 3 children and both work full time jobs we decided to try telemedicine. We were able to be evaluated and receive treatments at Ellsworth County Medical Center through KUMed. We see the psychologist twice per month and a psychiatrist every 4-6 weeks. Without the convenience of telemedicine we would have had to drive 3 hours to receive these services. Needless to say, telemedicine has given us the opportunity to provide my son with the services he requires and still be able to maintain our normal work and family schedule. "

Quicker Referral Time:

We have found that we can get patients into a specialist **faster** than through traditional office visits.

- Physicians are blocking time out for "telemed" patients
- By grouping and organizing patients, we can move from patient to patient quickly, making it an efficient method for the physician's time.
- The physician can dictate on the previous patient at his desk while we clean and move the next patient into place. It is a time efficient method of delivering the same specialized care, eliminating the need to move from room to room.

Telemedicine brings Specialty Physicians to rural Kansas:

- Rural hospitals cannot afford to staff specialists.
- Critical Access Hospitals are already financially strapped with reduction in reimbursements:
 - 2% Medicare sequestration
 - Kansas not expanding Medicaid
 - High deductibles plans
- Specialty physicians do not want to move to rural Kansas.

Outpatient Clinics vs Telemedicine

- We do have several specialist physicians that come to ECMC to hold “clinics” on location.
- These providers live within an hour of ECMC, and have given up their reimbursable patient time to travel to our facility for the convenience of our patients.
- They “rent” space out our facility. They bring their own staff.
- With telemedicine, we are supplying a Registered Nurse that costs more than our originating site reimbursement.
- ECMC has chosen to continue telemedicine even though we are losing money, because we are committed to providing excellent care to our patients. Telemedicine brings the specialty physician to our patients, eliminating travel hardships.
- Peripheral devices connect to our telemed system and are used to insure the quality of the visit is the same as an in office visit. These include:
 - Digital stethoscopes
 - General camera
 - Horus scope that includes:
 - Otoscope (hearing)
 - Dermoscope (skin)
 - high magnifying general scope

Parity for Physicians is important to the physician and rural hospitals because:

Physicians need reimbursement to be the same as a normal office visit so ECMC and other rural hospitals can encourage physicians to try telemedicine to:

- maintain our current telemed provider list
- recruit new specialists into our telemedicine program

If physicians are not reimbursed in the same manner, why would they want to join our program and bring their care to rural Kansans?

We are currently recruiting a specialist that would like to do telemedicine for other rural Kansas communities. Parity will be a huge factor in their decision to come to ECMC. Eliminating barriers for physicians through telemedicine is what is right for rural Kansas.

Insurance coverage and adequate reimbursement for originating sites:

There is also a dire need for rural hospitals to be reimbursed enough to cover their expenses. Our originating site fee is \$50.00. Currently we are reimbursed an average of \$37.00; however, our cost for a Registered Nurse to assist with the visit is running an average of \$45.00. This does not include other expenses such as marketing, equipment, and utilities. Proper reimbursement from insurance is critical to allow us to continue to develop and maintain our telemedicine program.

As you know, Critical Access Hospitals across the state continue to struggle to find ways to fund operations. Without proper reimbursement, telemedicine programs could be the first to be cut.

Rural Kansas needs your help to bring specialized care to our patients through telemedicine.