

Rural Hospitals Improving Quality of Care through ETGP Videoconferencing Equipment

Kan-ed-- Where Kansans Access the Information Age



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Kan-ed allocated Enhancing Technology Grant Program (ETGP) funds to Edwards County Hospital, Trego County Lemke Memorial Hospital, and Phillips County Health Systems for the purchase of videoconferencing equipment to facilitate meetings for staff consultations for practicing health care professionals.

Thyra Strate, Director of Risk Management at Edwards County Hospital, described the benefits of the videoconferencing equipment. "The equipment has definitely improved our quality of care because we've been able to keep current with different medical practices and increase awareness of updates with regulations and compliance issues. If we're able to increase the education of our medical staff and employees, that will improve the quality of care we deliver and also keep us in compliance with regulations that are always changing."



Joleen Schuster, Manager of Information Technology and Services at Trego County Lemke Memorial Hospital, described, "We've been able to better serve our patients. Using the videoconferencing equipment, they are getting evaluated quicker than if we were waiting for someone to come in person. And, using the equipment for education purposes is helping our employees do a better job. We've had classes that we've used the Interactive Television (ITV). The education needs that it serves have been enormous."

Kelly Vanderplas, Education and Telemedicine Coordinator for Phillips County Health Systems, shared that they use the equipment for consultations, trainings, and meetings. On one occasion a patient came into the ER in a crisis situation; the nurse was able to contact a Mental Health Professional (MHP) through videoconferencing, within minutes. The MHP was able to assess the patient and develop a plan of treatment in a short amount of time, while saving the patient hours of travel time. "The new equipment provides a very life-like interaction between patient and provider, which helps put the patient at ease," Vanderplas stated.

The videoconferencing equipment has made attending training sessions outside of the community much more convenient as it allows staff to stay at the hospital and learn from a distance. Strate mentioned that this is essential to small hospitals. "It's been very successful to be able to provide education to our medical staff and hospital employees so they are not leaving the community. It's a definite plus that it is provided here. Also, when you just have one or two physicians, they're not always able to leave the community because they're needed here to take care of their patients. I know a lot of small communities have the same issue."

Each hospital expressed appreciation of the Kan-ed funding. Strate remarked, "We are so very appreciative that they've allowed these grants to continue because without the equipment it would be very difficult where we're located to be able to get the education without traveling." Schuster commented, "We wouldn't have this technology had it not been for the grant. I know with all the needs of the hospital, that's one of the things that would have been on the back burner." Vanderplas stated, "It is a great communication tool for both the hospital and the patient, and we feel very fortunate to have these capabilities in our small rural hospital."

Edwards County Hospital
Serves: 3,000+
community members,
70+ staff
Kan-ed member since:
June 6, 2003

**Trego County Lemke
Memorial Hospital**
Serves: 4,000+
community members,
185+ staff
Kan-ed member since:
June 5, 2003

**Phillips County Health
Systems**
Serves: 5,800+
community members,
120+ staff
Kan-ed member since:
June 6, 2003