

Network News



**EASTERN
MONTANA
TELEMEDICINE
NETWORK**



EMTN ~ The Year In Review

- Three new sites were added to the Network:
St John's Lutheran Ministries– Billings
McCone County Health Center– Circle
St. Peter's Hospital– Helena
- Four nurse presenters trained to assist providers with telemedicine consults. Nurses are from Glasgow, Miles City, Circle and Plentywood.
- A monthly neurology clinic was launched between Glasgow and Billings.
- A cardiology clinic was launched connecting providers in Billings with patients in Miles City.
- A monthly rheumatology clinic serves Livingston patients.
- Neurology consults are now available from Billings Clinic to Circle and Plentywood.
- Fifty one Billings Clinic and thirty non-Billings Clinic providers use telemedicine for patient consults.

In the past fiscal year clinical usage of telemedicine shows a significant increase. For the first time on the network, medical consult numbers have surpassed the number of mental health consults on the network. Total connections reached nearly 3500.

*From July 1st of 2007 to June 30th, 2008:
EMTN Connected 1334 Medical Consults and
1255 Mental Health Consults*

Billings Clinic offers consults in the following specialty areas: oncology, neurology, rheumatology, cardiology, pulmonary, pediatrics, podiatry, dietary, dermatology, gerontology, infectious diseases, and psychiatry. Twenty-one regional sites connect for medical and mental health care. The entire oncology staff, the entire psychiatry staff and most of the neurology and pulmonary staffs at Billings Clinic use telemedicine to reach their patients.

Additionally over 30 providers outside of Billings Clinic see patients over the EMTN network. These specialists represent mental health professionals, dietitians, University of Utah burn specialists, Shodair family and genetic counselors, oncologists and the Shrine's orthopedics specialists.

In addition to the four new clinics noted above, a twice monthly neurology clinic was added to the current neurology clinic serving patients from the Glendive Medical Center.

Providers who have not used telemedicine to see patients are requesting these services. Citing the increased cost of gas as a

barrier to access for patients, providers seek telemedicine as a viable solution. The coming year is expected to show continued adoption of telemedicine by more providers, specialists and patients.

Dieticians Teach Patients Over Telemedicine

"We have a patient with a new diagnosis of diabetes and the only nutrition information available is from the cook in the kitchen. We don't have a dietician. How can we help patients get the nutrition education they need?"

Patients with diabetes are challenged to learn about their disease. Food choices, accurate serving sizes, and the relationship between dietary intake and exercise are undertakings that can seem immense. Without access to a dietician or diabetic educator, the details are overwhelming. A team of dieticians at Billings Clinic is available to assist with education and monitoring of patients in the region.

Heather Petty, Clinical Nutrition Manager with Sodexo at Billings Clinic spearheaded a program to provide dietician services across the traditional boundaries of facility and location. Telemedicine consults are available for many needs including hypercholesterolemia, renal disease, diabetes, obesity and increased protein needs for patients undergoing chemotherapy.

In 2006 Medicare added dieticians and nutrition professionals to the list of practitioners who may receive payment for services provided over telemedicine. Individual medical nutrition therapy is now a reimbursable service. The payment amount for the professional services provided via telemedicine is equal to the current fee schedule for in-person services.

Dieticians are able to show patients accurate samples of serving sizes, view patient blood sugar readings, share printed information, and answer questions.

"The rise in obesity throughout the United States and the rest of the world has increased the risk of chronic diseases including cancer, heart attack/stroke, osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, respiratory problems and diabetes," states Beth Wiome, Dietician. "Telemedicine enables healthcare providers, dietitians and diabetes educators, to provide patients with access to specialty nutrition care related to the diseases while reducing travel time and expenses for patients."