

Network News



**EASTERN
MONTANA
TELEMEDICINE
NETWORK**



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What is EMTN?

- A clinical visit between a medical specialist and a rural patient.
- An opportunity for professional education.
- A means of providing care to patients without the burden of travel costs.
- A peer support network for professionals.
- A way to instantly attend meetings hundreds of miles away.

Eastern Montana Telemedicine Network is all of this and more. Beginning with six sites in 1993, it has grown to a robust operation with 27 current sites. A trained facilitator staffs each site. This individual ensures that equipment, appointments and meetings run smoothly.

Patient visits are completed in several specialty areas including psychiatry, gerontology, neurology, endocrinology, orthopedics, dietary education, infectious disease, genetics, dermatology, and post-surgical evaluations. The interactive connection allows for specialists to consult with the patient attended by the rural provider and family if desired. The entities can be located at multiple locations and attend the same consult: seeing, hearing and conversing with one another.

Professional education and support are a cornerstone of the network. Weekly medical grand rounds, monthly nursing grand rounds, professional peer review, wound and ostomy support network and tumor board are a few of the regular offerings.

Infectious Diseases Docs Connect

Dr. Ed Septimus and Dr. David Graham have discovered a new way to connect with patients in the region. Using a desktop unit complete with camera and monitor screen located in an exam room in the Infectious Diseases department, the doctors consult with patients across Montana. Challenging cases have been referred from providers to these specialists. Current patients also have taken advantage of using the system for follow-up visits.

Since August patients have been seen from Big Timber, Miles City, Missoula, Bozeman, Red Lodge, and Livingston. Cases varied from surgical wound infections to stubborn recurring facial rashes, fevers of unknown origin to MRSA. The referring provider has presented the case, reviewing history, treatments, labs, and X-rays. Alternatively, the patient information was faxed to the doctor's office prior to each visit. In each case, Dr. Septimus and Dr. Graham were able to provide education, further testing suggestions to pinpoint a diagnosis, or patient specific treatment. The referring sites benefited by providing the labs, medication and additional services needed by the patient. Physicians benefited by continuing to provide quality care to patients. These telemedicine consults were reimbursable.

Patients and families shared positive comments about the care they received.

"It is such a relief to have Mom do this visit from our home town. Driving 2 1/2 hours each way to see the physician is a strain on her. I didn't even need to take a whole day off from work!"

"Keep doing this (telemedicine). It worked so well for me. I was able to discuss my case with Dr. Graham and have my questions answered."

Patients are eager to have repeat visits via telemedicine. The cost of gas, lodging and travel time are eliminated by this technology. A caring doctor filling a TV screen is a powerful image of attentive listening.

Connecting providers with patients, overcoming social and geographical barriers, excellent patient care: these are the goals of telemedicine.

