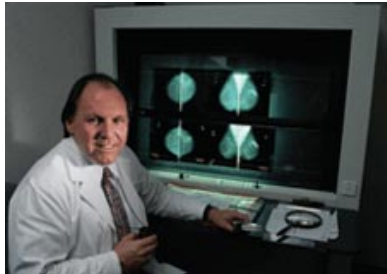




Banner Health
**North Colorado
Medical Center®**



Tele-Health

About Us

Tele-Health is the use of tele-communications for the exchange of information in health care.

North Colorado Medical Center uses many technological tools to bridge communication between urban and rural medical facilities.

Telephone, digital imaging and video conferencing are just three ways urban specialists provide consultations, education, and training to health care providers in rural communities.

Tele-Health: History

Banner Health currently operates in a partnership with the High Plains Rural Health Network (HPRHN), a tele-video system that connects 26 rural and urban communities in four states. Administrative, education, and clinical departments throughout the Banner Health utilize this service. North Colorado Medical Center is also using the HPRHN communication lines for tele-radiology service in the outlying communities of Wray, Julesburg, Holyoke and Brush, Colorado.

In 2000, Banner Health became the primary technical support for the HPRHN system, which is facilitated through the Information Technology department at North Colorado Medical Center. A system bridge is located at Sterling Regional

MedCenter. This project has resulted in significant savings in transmission costs.

Tele-Health: Focus Areas

The development of a director of Tele-Health position, and the related expansion of the Tele-Video and Tele-Health systems, is intended to improve quality and access in meeting the administrative, educational and clinical needs of Banner Health in a timely, cost-effective manner. Although we have seen a significant increase in the administrative use of the system, there continues to be significant opportunity to further leverage the ability of the system to increase efficiencies.

In the development of key national relationships, Banner Health is directly involved in activities at the Office for the Advancement of Tele-Health in Washington D.C., the American Telemedicine Association and the Association of Telemedicine Service Providers. These organizations provide access to those individuals involved in the development of federal laws and regulations regarding Telemedicine, as well as grant programs, legal review and opinions, and programmatic experience.

The Department of Tele-Health Services at Banner Health facilities will continue to develop and coordinate relationships with these and other outside organizations.

Tele-Health: Continuing Education

Tele-video provides an opportunity for outlying rural providers to receive continuing medical education. As the nation faces national staffing shortages, this technology allows urban providers and colleges to aid in the development of rural staff through a variety of training programs. This technology also allows our urban providers and staffs to develop new skills as we share information and experience.

Tele-Health: Clinical Use

Clinical use of Tele-Health was established to provide access to and reduce the cost of our current Specialty Physician Outreach Clinic program. It also helped to develop a regional system that ties outlying rural emergency rooms and tertiary providers. Tele-Health is used in the following services:

- Burn Care
- Echocardiograms
- Home Care
- Pediatric Rehabilitation
- Behavioral Health
- Residency Preceptorship
- Tele-Radiology
- Wound Care

Through the aggressive use of Tele-Video and computer based systems, we believe health care access can be significantly improved for communities that need increased and/or new coverage. This allows residents of rural areas to visit with physicians in urban communities without having to travel away from home.

It is important to know Medicare pays for specialty physician consults via Tele-Health systems. We hope this will motivate state and non-government payers to begin reimbursement for these consultations as well.

Tele-Health: Residency Program

We utilize the Tele-Video system to connect the Banner Health Residency Program at North Colorado Family Medicine in Greeley with its rural rotation site in Wray, CO. This allows daily "real time" communication between outlying residents and program faculty in Greeley. The ability to connect these providers is critical for this program.