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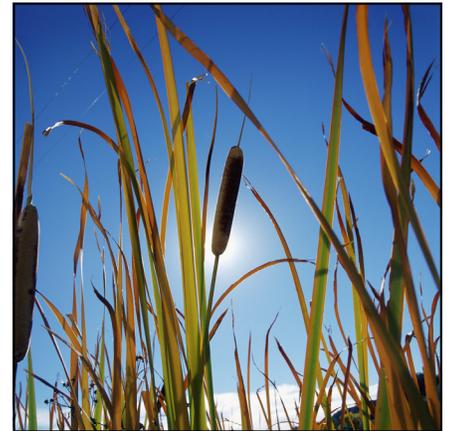
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Implementation of a Successful Teledermatology Program for Rural Veterans

A Store-and-Forward teledermatology project to improve access to dermatology care for Veterans living in rural areas of the Pacific Northwest was recently implemented by the VA Puget Sound Health Care System. An educational program for rural primary care providers and imaging technicians was developed in conjunction with the new teledermatology services. Participating providers were tested and their competencies were assessed at baseline and during a two-year project. Participation in the educational program improved the knowledge of dermatology diagnosis and treatment care plans. All of the providers were performing dermatology procedures (e.g. biopsies, excisions, cauteries) after two years and more patients were being seen at their rural clinics than when the teledermatology project began (85% vs 39%). After two years, 71% of the providers and 56% of the imaging technicians had completed surgical training sessions and all passed their competency assessments. The educational component of the teledermatology project created teams of primary care health-care providers and imaging technicians with improved dermatology educational levels and new dermatology skills. Participation in a comprehensive education program improved the knowledge of dermatology diagnosis and treatment care plans. *Citation: J Telemed Telecare. 2012;18(2):66-71.* ◆

Did You Know?

- 50% of all new cancers in the U.S. population annually are skin cancers. Skin cancers are associated with significant morbidity, mortality and economic burden. The incidence of melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancers has doubled over the last decade, and best estimates indicate over 2 million skin cancers are diagnosed each year in the US.
- Over the past 31 years, more people have had skin cancer than all other cancers combined.
- Between 40 and 50 percent of Americans who live to age 65 will have skin cancer at least once.
- Skin-cancer screening is important for detecting premalignant and malignant skin lesions at an early stage when they may be more amenable to intervention.
- Studies have shown that skin cancer screening for high risk populations is associated with high detection rate and improved treatment outcomes.
- In geographically remote or medically underserved areas, lack of access to dermatologists is often associated with reduced opportunities for skin-cancer surveillance (screening) and early intervention. ◆



VA Agreement Signed in Alaska

A new memorandum of understanding (MOU) between 14 Alaska Native Tribes and the Department of Veterans Affairs was signed last May in Alaska that will allow eligible Alaska Native Veterans to receive health care services at tribal clinics in various parts of Alaska instead of having to drive long distances to VA clinics in Anchorage or Seattle. Under this agreement, the VA will reimburse the participating tribal health care programs for services provided to eligible Veterans, including non-Native Veterans. In addition, the Alaska VA will coordinate training sessions for tribal staff on VA benefits, eligibility and the enrollment process. A list of the tribes and tribal organizations that have signed the agreement is available on the website of Senator Mark Begich. <http://begich.senate.gov/public/>. ◆

