Extent of Telehealth Use in Rural & Urban Hospitals

A recent policy brief published by the RUPRI Center for Rural Health Policy Analysis at The University of Iowa College of Public Health indicated that adoption of telehealth services in both rural and urban hospitals is relatively low. Telehealth (also known as telemedicine) is often used to connect rural-dwelling persons to needed healthcare services in urban settings. Examples include cardiology, radiology, and psychiatry services, among many others. The study reviewed data from several thousand hospitals, finding that approximately two-thirds had no telehealth services, while one-third had at least one established telehealth service. Among those hospitals with established services, 61.4% reported only having a single program, while 38.6% indicated two or more. Notably, there was no significant difference between rural and urban facilities in the overall rate of telehealth adoption, but there differences in the types of services offered, with rural facilities more like to have tele-radiology, for example. The authors suggest that future research should be conducted to identify organizational factors associated with telehealth adoption and implementation.


Did You Know?

- May is Hepatitis C Awareness Month
- Hepatitis C is a contagious liver disease that ranges from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a lifelong illness.
- In 2009, there were an estimated 16,000 acute Hepatitis C virus infections reported in the United States.
- An estimated 3.2 million persons in the United States have chronic Hepatitis C virus infection. Most people do not know they are infected because they don’t look or feel sick.
- Approximately 75%-85% of people who become infected with Hepatitis C virus develop chronic infection.
- Hepatitis C is usually spread when blood from a person infected with the Hepatitis C virus enters the body of someone who is not infected.
- The Hepatitis C virus can survive outside the body at room temperature, on environmental surfaces, for at least 16 hours, but no longer than 4 days.
- Hepatitis C virus has not been shown to be transmitted by mosquitoes or other insects.
- There are several medications available to treat chronic Hepatitis C, including new treatments that appear to be more effective and have fewer side effects than previous options.
- Twenty to thirty percent of people who have been infected may clear the virus from their blood with no treatment. These people no longer have hepatitis C and are not infectious.


Rural Veterans Have Higher Vaccination Rates than General Population

U.S. citizens aged 65 and older, including Veterans, are heavily burdened by influenza and pneumonia, together causing more than 50,000 deaths annually. Fortunately, vaccines have been available for many years to protect against both illnesses. However, many who would benefit from vaccination have not been vaccinated. CDC estimates that 4 out of every 10 U.S. citizens go unprotected each year, never receiving vaccination and leaving themselves vulnerable to a potentially fatal illness. In a study of recent vaccination rates among rural Veterans—compared to those living in urban areas—nearly 3 million Veterans medical records were analyzed to determine vaccination uptake. The results indicated that Veteran influenza vaccination rates were higher than the general population (73% versus 68%) as were pneumococcal vaccination rates (74% versus 60%), which suggests that programs designed to increase access to important healthcare services in rural areas are having success.