

PALO PINTO GENERAL HOSPITAL LAUNCHES TELE-PULMONARY & CRITICAL CARE PROGRAM WITH ACCESS PHYSICIANS

Meeting More Complex Care Needs Locally

 In keeping with its goal to provide high quality care locally, in May 2020, Palo Pinto General Hospital began offering pulmonary and critical care through telemedicine with Access Physicians. This partnership allows the PPGH staff to connect with a board-certified pulmonary intensivist via a high-resolution camera and secure connection within minutes.

On-site respiratory therapists, nurses, and other physicians now have access to a higher level of consultation to diagnose and treat critically ill patients who may require mechanical ventilation. The Access Physicians group is also skilled in managing other diagnoses, such as complex infections, pulmonary hypertension, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Through use of the Access Cart and telemedicine partnership, patients can be seen anywhere in the hospital, including the medical surgical floor 24/7, 365 days a year.

The hospital had prior experience and familiarity with using telemedicine for other services, such as behavioral health, and sought a telemedicine partner that would complement and augment its



medical staff so that the hospital could care for more patients with critical care needs.

“In deploying a telemedicine partnership with Access Physicians, our goal was to eliminate gaps in care coverage and availability for our patients,” said Amy Waller, Chief Nursing Officer at PPGH. “The Access Physicians team was straightforward in its approach with us. We talked with other hospitals that work with Access Physicians and ultimately concluded that they would be the best partner with our organization to help us achieve our patient care goals.”





A Seamless Clinical and Technological Experience

📶 PPGH's pulmonary and critical care telemedicine program initially launched in the ICU, with new consults for non-critical care, medical/surgical patients added within the first week.

The Access Physicians specialist integrates with the hospital's existing workflow. He or she performs patient rounds with on-site nursing and other clinical staff every morning just as if the physician were at the hospital in-person. If the Access Physicians specialist is needed in emergent situations, hospital staff can connect in under five minutes. In both situations, the

Access Cart with its large high-definition screen and no-click launch is used to bring the physician to the bedside. With the cart and its Bluetooth-enabled digital stethoscope, the physician can assess the patient and seamlessly



Lisa Temple, RN

integrate with the care team's discussion and care planning.

"The technology involved has been very impressive," said Lisa Temple, RN, ICU manager at PPGH. "The cart has very user-friendly connectivity, and although the physician is



remote, it feels like they are in the room guiding the treatment and actions needed."

The physician also enters orders and notes directly into the hospital's EMR without any third-party software required for data integration. "Our philosophy is 'if it's not in your EMR, it didn't happen,'" said Chris Gallagher, M.D., CEO, Access Physicians. "Working in each hospital's EMR in real-time ensures that all clinical documentation is up to date, and orders are entered into the patient record."



Outcomes and ROI

📶 With every telemedicine program it deploys, Access Physicians seeks to further each hospital's individual quality, patient care, and financial goals. Partner hospitals receive monthly metrics reports to track and trend outcomes to ensure the program is meeting goals and to identify any areas of needed improvement.

In just a few months of the Access Physicians pulmonary and critical care telemedicine partnership, PPGH experienced:

- 50 percent increase in case mix index.
- 30 percent increase in ICU volume.
- Reduction in transfers of patients needing pulmonary care to other hospitals to 5 percent from a high of 16 percent.

ABOUT PALO PINTO GENERAL HOSPITAL

📶 Located in Mineral Wells, Texas, a rural community of about 15,000 residents located 50 miles from Fort Worth and 75 miles from Dallas, Palo Pinto General Hospital serves a 952 square-mile area, covering more than 30,000 people.

The hospital has been a mainstay in the community since 1965 and continuously seeks to meet the evolving needs of its patients by expanding its services to include surgery; obstetrics; behavioral health; and an array of outpatient clinic services from primary care to orthopedics. Its goal is to provide a high level of care and allow as many patients as possible to stay in their local community and avoid being sent to more distant facilities for their health care needs.



“ With the Access Physicians partnership, we are enhancing the level of care provided at Palo Pinto General Hospital.

We have 24/7, 365 days a year Tele-Pulmonary and Critical Care coverage so we can keep more patients closer to home and improve access to care. ”

■ Ross Korkmas
CEO | Palo Pinto General Hospital



Keys to Success

📶 While each hospital has unique staffing, operational, and other circumstances, Palo Pinto General Hospital identified several essential steps to take prior to deployment of a telemedicine partnership to ensure successful implementation of the telemedicine service line and ongoing utilization:

-  Secure buy-in and understanding of how to engage the tele-specialists from on-staff hospitalists and other clinical staff.
-  Involve the ICU and cardiopulmonary directors to review any additional capital needs and educate frontline employees.
-  Inform and educate hospital staff about the service in regular committee meetings.
-  Review and update, as needed, clinical and EMR policies and procedures.
-  Engage pharmacy staff to ensure the formulary includes any possible new medications to care for critically ill patients.
-  Include the public in education about the service.
-  Incorporate discussion of the telemedicine program into regular quality meetings.



“ We highly recommend the Access Physicians telemedicine partnership.

In a short amount of time, we saw improvement in our quality metrics and case mix index. And, patients, families, and nurses have expressed gratitude about the service availability and responsiveness.”

■ Amy Waller
CNO | Palo Pinto General Hospital

About Access Physicians

📶 Endorsed by state and rural hospital associations, Access Physicians is a multispecialty physician group that combines clinical workflows, peer-referenced specialists, and a world-class telemedicine experience supported with a clinical sense of urgency. Access Physicians delivers clinical excellence through telemedicine — building and sustaining custom telemedicine programs that work for hospitals, patients, physicians, and nurses. Its core service lines are: hospitalist, cardiology, cardiac arrest management, general neurology and acute stroke, pulmonary and critical care, infectious disease, and maternal-fetal medicine.

More information is available at accessphysicians.com. 📶

