

# Avera eCARE<sup>®</sup>

## EXPANDING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ACCESS TO THOSE IN NEED

### CHALLENGE

Provide Behavioral Health expertise for after-hours and gap coverage in acute care settings to ensure 24/7 access.

### INTRODUCTION

In 2018, Avera Health received a \$7.8 million grant from The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust to build a 24-hour telemedicine behavioral health team. The Avera eCARE Behavioral Health team engaged ViTel Net to provide the technology needed to efficiently scale their eCARE Behavioral Health services for Emergency Departments (ED) with limited care capabilities.

With the implementation of vCareCommand™ - ViTel Net's cloud-based platform - Avera eCARE's Behavioral Health professionals are able to remain within a single and consistent user experience for workflow and documentation, regardless of which rural hospital partner they are providing services for. With standards-based integration to the partner site's EMR (electronic medical record system), vCareCommand automates the creation of patients in the telehealth system as well as the update of the patient's record in the referring site's EMR. The combination of a single interface and automated administrative tasks has allowed Avera eCARE to scale its behavioral health services to more hospitals cost-effectively and without compromising on Avera eCARE's high standard of quality care.

### URGENT NEED

When a behavioral crisis occurs, getting appropriate care is paramount. Provide Behavioral Health expertise for after-hours and gap coverage in acute care settings to ensure 24/7 access is usually sought. The individual, often with family or friends, depends on the hospital to provide immediate care. Yet, 24/7 behavioral health services are rarely available in rural hospitals. Avera eCARE fills that care gap.

Prior to telemedicine, a patient had to wait to be seen by a credentialed clinician or travel - potentially hours - to a location with available services. Avera eCARE Behavioral Health offers an alternative, collaborating with on-site care teams by extending 24/7 access to psychiatrists, medical social workers, and behavioral health nurses. This team works within eCARE's Joint Commission Accredited virtual hospital, providing expert evaluation via two-way audio and video technology to emergency departments, medical inpatient, law enforcement, and psychiatric inpatient units.



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#### THE SOLUTION

ViTel Net has configured an interoperable solution that standardized documentation and workflows, interfacing between the hospitals' EMR and the telehealth platform, vCareCommand. Patient care is immediate and enhanced. The eCARE team uses one template, regardless of their partner's EMR system.

#### HOW IT WORKS

When a rural hospital partner needs services, they call the Avera eCARE hub. With the information obtained about the patient in the initial call, eCARE is able to search for the patient in ViTel Net, which automatically pulls the demographics from the referring site EMR, and is able to create the Behavioral Health encounter for the appropriate eCARE clinical team member. The behavioral health specialist connects with the patient via real-time video conference, conducts the consult or assessment, and documents directly in the standardized form in ViTel Net. At the conclusion of the encounter, the eCARE clinician electronically signs and sends the encounter, and ViTel Net automatically attaches the summary note to the patient's record in the referring site's EMR.

#### BENEFITS

The ViTel Net team worked closely with the providers and partners to devise a solution that standardizes the documentation and workflows. The resulting program yields these benefits.

##### *Immediate Care for Patients*

The eCARE Behavioral Health team extends immediate, 24/7 access to psychiatrists, medical social workers, and behavioral health nurses. This team provides expert evaluation via two-way audio and video technology to the ED, treating the patient directly.

##### *Assisting the Local Healthcare Team*

Avera eCARE provides local providers with inpatient consults to assist with decision making for patients with potential underlying behavioral health conditions. The support extends from patient evaluation, treatment, and follow up care to clinical consults with a patient's physician.

##### *One Patient, One Record*

With the ViTel Net integration, the hospital maintains one complete patient record at the conclusion of the encounter. Those involved in the patient's treatment plan can seamlessly access that data to ensure transparency of the patient's encounters for greater clinical efficiency and better outcomes.

##### *Efficient, effective care for scale*

The Avera team documents each encounter in its own standard templates, regardless of the EMR their partner is using in the ED. The workflow is consistent and always the same, which allows the clinician to focus on the patient - not the technology.



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### FACTS AND FIGURES

- 111 million people live in areas of the country with a shortage of mental health professionals.  
–*Department of Health and Human Services as per WSJ (April 10, 2020)*
- 65% of non-metropolitan counties do not have a psychiatrist  
47% of non-metropolitan counties do not have a psychologist  
–*American Journal of Preventive Medicine study (2018) study*
- Rural areas have:
  - Highest suicide rates in the nation
  - High concentration of veterans, who experience higher rates of suicide than nonveterans
  - Drug overdose rates in rural areas have surpassed those in metropolitan areas–*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

### Avera eCARE

In 1993, Avera Health made its initial venture into telemedicine and formed Avera eCARE® with the goal of delivering telehealth care across a network of small hospitals in a wide geographic region. Their network has grown to service communities nationally, and not only provide services, but also teach others to provide telemedicine. Today, their partners and patients benefit from the multidisciplinary collaboration of medical specialists within our telemedicine teams 24/7/365. The team continues to innovate new virtual services to empower their providers and care for their patients.