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» Collaboration with Vanderbilt bringing teleneurology services to two Mountain States hospitals

Monday, April 13, 2015

Collaboration with Vanderbilt bringing teleneurology services to two Mountain States hospitals

Two Mountain States Health Alliance hospitals are collaborating with Vanderbilt University Medical Center to provide local patients with neurology care via telemedicine.

The two facilities – Sycamore Shoals Hospital in Elizabethton and Franklin Woods Community Hospital in Johnson City – will have 24/7 access by video to do live consultations with doctors on Vanderbilt’s board-certified neurology staff. When a patient presents with headache, seizure or stroke symptoms, teams at these two hospitals will have access to Vanderbilt’s specialists just as if they were physically at Franklin Woods or Sycamore Shoals.

The teleneurologist in Nashville will be able to see and examine the patient in real time and ask questions of the patient and the physician here in East Tennessee by video-conferencing on an iPad.

“Getting quick access to a neurologist like this will help us take better care of patients,” said Dr. Bert J. Smith, vice president for hospital programs and service line development at Mountain States. “It will improve the speed of diagnosis, improve access to care, and decrease the number of patients who have to transfer out to another facility.”

Vanderbilt’s protocol is for the physician at SSH or Franklin Woods to contact the on-call neurologist and then the neurologist will utilize a secure, HIPAA-compliant Facetime session through an iPad to perform the physical examination and assessment. Vanderbilt neurologists will also be able to see test results such as CT scans or MRIs within a few minutes in order to help with their diagnosis.

Dr. Kent Wright, Mountain States’ chief medical officer for the Southeast Market, said the new technology is critical for this area, considering every minute counts when dealing with strokes and seizures.

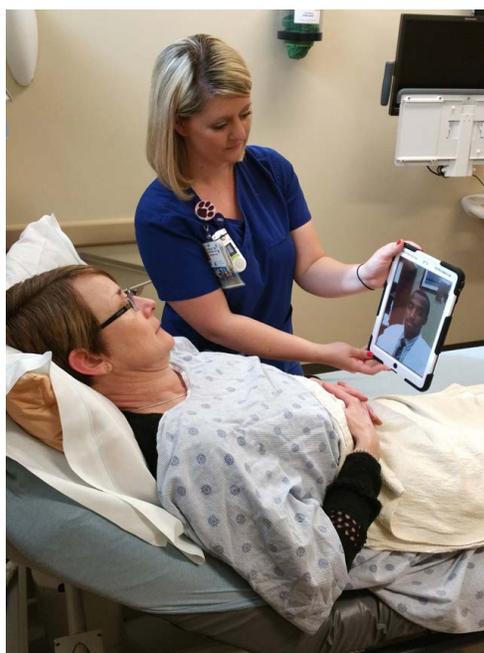
“Early intervention is the key to success when treating victims of stroke,” Wright said. “Not only will these patients be able to receive world-class neurological care, but they will be able to be treated much earlier now, thanks to this new partnership.”

The teleneurology collaboration took effect in March. While the Johnson City Medical Center already maintains 24/7 neurology coverage and advanced stroke services, Mountain States plans to expand the teleneurology service to other facilities.

Dr. David Charles, director of telemedicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center and chief medical officer for the Vanderbilt Neuroscience Institute, said there is a widespread shortage of neurologists, so teleneurology is becoming a new standard of care for hospitals that don’t have their own specialists on site.

“With this collaboration, Mountain States is being creative and taking the lead in finding ways to meet the needs of patients in the area,” Charles said.

PHOTO CAPTION: Emergency department staff at Franklin Woods Community Hospital and Sycamore Shoals Hospital can use video technology to do a live consultation with board-certified neurologists from Vanderbilt University Medical Center.



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