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Thinking inside the box: Using telehealth to expand clinical education and training resources in the developing world

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Twenty years ago, The University of Virginia became one of the first medical centers in the United States to see the potential of using video communications to improve access to needed healthcare, especially for rural communities. To that end, the University formed a Center for Telehealth to mobilize physicians, nurses, community health professionals and technologists to harness broadband and wireless technologies to deliver critical medical services to patients regardless of location. This UVA Network has created access to care for thousands in rural communities throughout Virginia but also has extended the reach of health education, training and specialty care to Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia. And with emerging globalization, the health of people in distant communities can affect the health of people everywhere.

The focus of this presentation will be the current state of telehealth capabilities in providing both broadband and wireless connectivity into hard to reach communities. With the decrease cost of video-technology, the rapid expansion of cellular service and the near ubiquitous presence of cell phones, the environment for care is expanding. The speakers, with 20 years of nursing, public health and telehealth experience, will provide a primer on how to establish a telehealth program, a review of costs and technologies as well as an exploration of various clinical use cases.

In particular, the speakers will review the outcomes from four successful projects that include a surgical and nurse training program with the University of Rwanda, a specialty clinic in Liberia, a mid-wife training in the DRC (PROSAMI) as well as educational and research support for projects in Uganda, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Participants will leave with a broader understanding of telehealth, program design and ideas for expanding the reach of clinical services.

Biography

Elke Jones Zschaebitz, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, has served as adjunct faculty in the FNP program at Georgetown since 2013. She has been an NP since 1998, initially working in Germany for nine years with the Department of Defense. During that time, she discovered her love of teaching, working with programs such as Student2Student (S2S) for which she received a national award for innovation and excellence in mentoring high school students within the Department of Defense educational network. Elke returned to the states in 2007 and was appointed as an assistant professor at the University of Virginia (UVA) School of Nursing. She continued her academic work in 2010 serving as faculty at the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing to help improve their preceptorship program. While at UVA, she received an innovative teaching award in 2010 for her program promoting cultural competence and ensuring preceptorship immersion in the coalfield region in Southern Appalachia. She also served as faculty for the Healthy Appalachia Institute, a public health institute at UVA's College at Wise. Elke's clinical practice experience includes work with the Wilkinson Pediatric Clinic at Ft. Lee, Planned Parenthood of the Blue Ridge in Charlottesville, the Minute Clinics of Richmond, the High Risk Breast and Ovarian Clinic at UVA and in an integrated clinic called Thrive Health Care serving the LGBT community as well as those with complex physical and mental health conditions. She currently practices as a family nurse practitioner at the UVA Elson Student Health Center in Charlottesville, VA. In addition she serves as a volunteer at the Charlottesville Free Clinic precepting FNP and medical students in a community-based interdisciplinary program.

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