

## Telemedicine is Coming to Newman Memorial Hospital!

Living in rural, Western Oklahoma is vastly different in many ways than life in a large city. Terms like “slower-pace” and “old-fashioned values” are often brought to the forefront when singing the praises of a small town lifestyle. However, when it comes to your local hospital and obtaining medical services, you want to hear things like, “cutting edge technology” and “highly specialized care”. Newman Memorial Hospital is working hard to provide a medical home for the community it serves. That means, not only offering the latest in medical technology, but also providing access to the services that the community needs. That is why we are currently working to make expanded Telemedicine services a reality for the population we serve. This is the technology that will be used to allow access to specialists otherwise not available. Appointments will be available soon with a Cardiologist, Neurologist, Psychiatrist and Opioid Addiction Physician.

But what exactly is Telemedicine? Telemedicine uses technology to connect patients to physicians and specialists that are not available in our area. Audio and video multimedia telecommunication equipment permits two-way real-time communication between a doctor and a patient who are not in the same physical location. Secured internet cameras and digital stethoscopes are used along with the assistance of a trained nurse so that doctors can talk to and examine you. You and your family will be able to see the doctor on a large computer screen, ask questions and discuss your treatment plan. We are using technology to bring services to Newman that would, in most cases, require a drive to Oklahoma City or Amarillo. It is similar to using Skype or FaceTime to talk via computer, but is more secure in order to protect your private health information.

Telemedicine activities must comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Security Rules and all other applicable state and federal laws and regulations. According to Newman's Information Technology (IT) Director, Robert Neal, “All of our security measures are in place. The Telemedicine and documentation program is all HIPAA compliant. We are using point to point tunneling encryption, meaning no one can hack into it. It's the same program that NASA uses. All records are stored in a secure server, just like any other doctor visit.” NMH is also using a dedicated internet connection so that the speed issues that you sometimes get with a shared connection are not applicable.

Telemedicine is an innovative way to connect people in rural areas to specialty physicians right here at home. But will it be covered by insurance? Oklahoma state law requires coverage of telemedicine services by health care service plans, disability insurer programs, workers' compensation programs and state Medicaid programs. When you, or your physician, call to schedule an appointment with the cardiologist, neurologist, psychiatrist or opioid addiction physician, you will be preregistered by the Newman Memorial Hospital registration team. Your insurance benefits will be checked and verified so that you know ahead of time what your responsibility will be and what services are covered. In most instances, in accordance with state law, these visits are covered just like any other visit with a specialist....without the 6 hour round trip drive! All of the final pieces are being put into place and scheduling has already begun. To find out if telemedicine is right for you or your loved one, talk to your physician about a referral. To schedule an appointment, call the main hospital number 580-938-2551 and get connected to the specialist you need, where you need them!