

## Wyoming Telehealth Network

### November 2021 Provider Spotlight

Izabella Z. Jackson, BSN RN

Facility Telehealth Coordinator/Nurse Manager Care Coordinator Home Telehealth,  
Cheyenne VA Medical Center



With VA telehealth, patients can get care from their healthcare providers without having to travel. And with the mobile telehealth unit, there is more access than ever. Patients can get checkups and treatment, talk about their personal care and more— from inside their own home, the mobile unit, or elsewhere. Read this month's spotlight to learn more about this innovative way of providing access to care from Cheyenne VA Health Center's Izabella Jackson.

#### **1. When did you first hear about telehealth? How did you feel about it then? How do you feel about it now?**

I was fortunate to have gone to nursing school with the first Manager for Mobile Telehealth for the Cheyenne VA, Michelle Mulberry. She and I have been friends for a long time, and she described to me the launch of the Mobile Units and telehealth. I was extremely excited for the opportunity to care for patients in a virtual way that would bridge the gaps in Rural Care. For my clinical rotation for my BSN

from UW, I was allowed to travel with the Mobiles and learn about Telehealth firsthand. I am still excited to explore different modalities of Telehealth to bridge that gap.

## **2. When did you begin offering telehealth services? What prompted the need to offer these services?**

Rural healthcare in Wyoming and Northern CO is a challenge due to lack of providers, wide open spaces in between cities and towns, weather, and lower population. All the reasons why we choose to live here present challenges for health care for the residents. Through the Office of Connected Care, the VA obtained funding for the Mobile Unit that now lives in Torrington at the VFW in 2009. Currently, we have Mobile crews that travel to Wheatland, Laramie, Torrington, Sterling CO. We have a Telehealth Clinic in Rawlins WY and one in Sidney NE. We have Clinics in Fort Collins and Loveland that see veterans via telehealth. We provide connections for veterans' care with their providers located throughout the US with Synchronous Telehealth visits as well as Asynchronous Telehealth. We are working on expansions for Optometry and Audiology to our rural clinics and expansions for specialty providers such as Neuro, Cardiology etc. to those areas as well.



## **3. What motivates you to continue offering telehealth services?**

I enjoy looking at ways to connect various services for quality health care utilizing Telehealth to minimize veterans travel, stress, and cost. The technology keeps getting better and more sophisticated to allow expansion to services within telehealth modalities available.

## **4. What is your proudest accomplishment with telehealth?**

As the Facility Telehealth Coordinator, I noted funding for a Tele ICU connection at our main facility in Cheyenne through the Office of Rural Health and coordinated meetings with the National Tele ICU Team

and our facility to get the infrastructure completed in each of our ICU rooms, IT, Bio Med, and the Telehealth Team. We first used Laptops and a static link to start a connection, then received a Mobile Tele ICU from Caregility, once the install was complete, we had a wall button that is pushed similar like a Code Blue button to gain connection with Tele ICU Critical Care Team for Intensivists and Critical Care nursing support. Due to the Global COVID 19 pandemic this connection allowed us to care for our veterans in house rather than having to send them out to community hospitals that were already at their capacity.

#### **5. What advice would you give patients wanting to try telehealth?**

With all the telehealth technology available now, veterans are encouraged by pointing out that they wouldn't miss work to travel, must drive to the main facility, keep their health care within the VA system for continuity of care and avoid delaying care for their overall health. I explain in basic terms that they would be able to see their provider in real time for VA Video Connect or CVT, or that images and data are uploaded for a specialist to review. Saving time, money, and stress for the veteran.

#### **6. What advice would you give providers wanting to start offering telehealth?**

Stay engaged with the veteran during the visit, active listening. Avoid distractions, set the camera so that the veteran sees your face clearly, speak clearly and ensure veteran can hear and see you. Explain the equipment and how it works. Involve the patient in their visit. Stay focused and organized in your visit. Review test results and medications and upcoming appointments for care. Recap outcomes with the patient at the end of the visit.

#### **7. What was the biggest barrier in providing telehealth services? Have you overcome it?**

Lack of bandwidth for good connections in some areas is a challenge to both the provider and the veteran. Working with IT to improve telehealth connections in rural areas and some of the sites have been updated. Resistance to change in delivery of healthcare with use of technology.

#### **8. How do you think implementing telehealth now will affect how things will be done at your organization after the pandemic is over?**

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, Telehealth care has provided safe access for patients. I believe that most that have had a successful connection to their care will continue to utilize Telehealth except when a Face-to-Face visit is medically mandatory.

#### **9. Is there anything you learned the hard way in telehealth implementation?**

Lack of understanding of building clinics, equipment, space, and connection needs. Engaging the staff to accept change in the delivery of care and use of technology to reach best practice for the care of veterans.

**10. Do you have any telehealth hacks or tricks?**

We have joined the Outpatient Staff Meetings and provide updates and trainings and new telehealth clinics and information every month. We set up a Help email group for the Telehealth Techs to be available for immediate help if needed. We have completed test calls for VA VIDEO CONNECT with 100% of Outpatient Staff and Providers, and veterans referred to us for instruction in a one-to-one setting for making sure connections go smoothly. Testing equipment connections prior to a visit.

**Bonus Question: Do you have a favorite podcast, book, or author?**

Favorite book series: Outlander Series by Diana Gabaldon and Florian's Gate-Series by T. Davis Bunn.