

Wyoming Telehealth Network

November Provider Spotlight

Dr. Anna Cummings Rork

Dr. Anna Cummings Rork was born and raised in Jackson, Wyoming and knew from an early age that she wanted to be a physician. She initially pursued medicine, thinking she would do backcountry, wilderness, emergency medicine (and even graduated from the Lander NOLS Wilderness EMT program in college!). But she was drawn to know more about people, know more about their life story, to build relationships and work toward improving quality of life. Dr. Rork ultimately found her calling in psychiatry.

Dr. Rork is a graduate of the Wyoming WWAMI medical program, completed residency at the University of Washington, and now practices as a board-certified psychiatrist with specialization in women's mental health, reproductive and perinatal psychiatry. She also has additional training in different modalities of psychotherapy, including trauma-focused and psychodynamic/psychoanalytic psychotherapy. With a commitment to practice within Wyoming, Dr. Rork opened a private telepsychiatry practice that serves people across the state, and notes that it is an honor to serve.

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

Dr. Rork: I first heard about telepsychiatry during my intern year at the University of Washington. I was fortunate to be a part of such a leader in the field when it comes to access for psychiatry. The University of Washington Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, in partnership with the AIMS (Advancing Integrated Mental Health Solutions) Center, is a champion for integrated and collaborative care models. This department actively works to increase access to psychiatric care, knowing that there is a national shortage of mental health providers in a world of increasing rates of mental illness and substance use disorders. I had the fortunate opportunity to work nearly 100% as a telepsychiatrist in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, which started about halfway through my third year of general psychiatry training. Adapting to telehealth imperative to stay connected and care for patients. As chief resident of one of the primary outpatient psychiatric teaching clinics, I was fortunate to work closely with clinic and program administrators to re-image patient care and resident training experiences with telehealth. This experience inspired the development of my own private telepsychiatry practice. There are not many blessings with a global pandemic, but the implementation of telemedicine in such a large scale is one of them and I believe it is here to stay.

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

Dr. Rork: My practice model is 100% telemedicine. This was prompted in part because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in part because I have gained such knowledge, experience, and comfort with practicing in this platform. Video conference platforms like Zoom have also allowed me to connect and become involved in different professional organizations across the state, like the Postpartum Support

International Chapter of Wyoming and the Maternal Mortality Review Committee of Wyoming, and the country, like the Center for Women's Health in Boston, MA. The ability to share and streamline information, services, and care is a tremendous asset to Wyoming state and residents. Given that Wyoming is so sparsely populated over a very large area, the state is well-positioned to embrace and integrate telemedicine into current and future medical practice.

3. What motivates you to continue offering telehealth services?

Dr. Rork: As physicians, it is our duty to help patients get connected to the care that they need and deserve. Telehealth allows me partner with patients and clinicians in providing sub-specialty psychiatric services across the entire Wyoming state. Being able to deliver quality care and help people via telemedicine continues to inspire and motivate me every day.

4. What is your proudest accomplishment with telehealth?

Dr. Rork: I am most proud of being able to honor my commitment of service to Wyoming residents through my private telepsychiatry practice.

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

Dr. Rork: I believe there exists a "rightness of fit" factor between patient and provider that is the most important ingredient to promote healing. Telehealth might be a way to find new connections with providers that would otherwise be unachievable without video-conferencing platforms. By bringing in a sense of open-mindedness and curiosity to telehealth, you might find yourself pleasantly surprised by the benefits of this experience.

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

Dr. Rork: There is a lot of enthusiasm in medical professional (as well as legislative and educational) communities to generate and promote telehealth, especially in Wyoming. If you have any notion of wanting to add telehealth to your practice, I highly encourage you to outreach the Wyoming Telehealth Network. I found the provider toolkit to be especially helpful in outlining action items and considerations for opening a telehealth practice.

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

Dr. Rork: I am most familiar with Teton County and my home community, and thus felt most comfortable with having my practice primarily focused there. But this did not fit my vision of enhancing access to subspecialty psychiatry across the state. With the help, support, and networking through my professional relationships, I was able to branch out and make myself available across Wyoming state.

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

Dr. Rork: Telehealth will undoubtedly be a part of the future of my practice.

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

Dr. Rork: I think sometimes the flexibility of telehealth can potentially be boundless without clear structure (or what we like to call in psychiatry as "setting the frame"). For instance, meeting with someone while they are driving, hiking in a national park, or sitting on a boat (all of which have

happened!) calls into question certain standards of safety and privacy. I try to set expectations with the visit before I meet with patients, and work to get folks rescheduled if need be!

10. Do you have any telehealth hacks or tricks?

Dr. Rork: I love the ability to automate reminders to my visits!

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

Dr. Rork: That's a tough question because I really enjoying exploring and finding new things! Right now, I am trying to make it a habit to listen to The Carlat Report Psychiatry podcast every day (in addition to The Office Ladies podcast). I have also really been enjoying novels by Lisa See and re-reading The Gift of Therapy by Irvin Yalom.