

In Rural Texas, ‘Bridge to Health’ Mobile Clinic Uses MEDITECH’s EHR to Deliver Better Care

Even though Palo Pinto General Hospital (Mineral Wells, TX) serves a rural community, their physicians and nurses see the same types of patients as clinicians in urban settings, said Maria Cantu, an NP at the hospital’s urgent care center.

“We see everything. Chronic conditions are essentially the norm in patient care all over this country, including here,” said Cantu.

The difference between Palo Pinto County and more populated areas is the distance to care facilities. For patients who don’t own a car, getting to follow-up appointments can be a challenge.

Reaching out to this underserved population is such an integral part of the PPGH mission that their clinic network includes Bridge to Health, a self-contained and fully equipped mobile clinic.

All six clinics, including Bridge to Health, implemented MEDITECH’s Expanse Ambulatory solution in 2017. Fully integrated with the hospital’s MEDITECH EHR, the solution makes it possible for the entire organization to share a single, comprehensive record for each patient, improving communication and care continuity.

Engaging the Community

As a DSHS Designated Rural Health Clinic, Bridge to Health offers services some primary care physicians don’t, such as the Texas Healthy Steps physical required for all children who receive Medicaid.

“The mobile clinic has helped us adapt to the demand for healthcare in this

area,” said George Thomas, MD, the medical director for the clinic network. “It’s a novel idea for a small-town hospital to do this. So what this mobile clinic does is, throughout the week, it goes from various locations, from high schools to smaller towns, like Graford, and basically provides care to the community that can’t make it to our central location.”

Bridge to Health visits local schools regularly, providing walk-in care and other services to students and faculty, such as DOT physicals for bus drivers. The schools are also an ideal location for reaching patients who don’t have access to reliable transportation.

“A lot of our patients actually walk to us, which is one of the reasons why we partnered with the schools, because our schools are in our neighborhoods. We wanted to be seen there,” said Tonya Crnkovic, the clinic supervisor.

If someone has an initial appointment in the urgent care clinic and follows up in the mobile clinic, staff have access to all of the same records, which has created a sense of cohesion beyond patient care. “I feel like with this system we’re finally actually part of the clinic network,” said Crnkovic, “because it is so easy to access the other clinic records.”

In addition to schools, Bridge to Health makes weekly stops at a supermarket and a Chamber of Commerce, and even makes appearances at special functions.

“Since it gets a lot of publicity wherever it goes, we take the mobile clinic to health fairs and other health-related events,” said Mary Howell, the PPGH clinic director. “It’s a very friendly entity.”



PPGH at a glance...

Palo Pinto General Hospital serves communities in the Possum Kingdom region of Palo Pinto County.

About PPGH:

- 48 staffed beds (AHA) or 99 staffed beds (vitals.com)
- Six outpatient clinics
- Level IV Trauma Center

About Mineral Wells

- Estimated population is 15,065*
- 23.5% live in poverty*
- Population per square mile is 823.*

* Statistics from census.gov.



A ‘Bridge to Health’ for the Underserved

Learn how Palo Pinto General Hospital’s mobile clinic uses MEDITECH Ambulatory to help them deliver better, more efficient care to rural communities.

<https://ehr.meditech.com/news/palo-pinto-mobile-clinic-uses-meditech-ambulatory-to-bridge-care-gaps-video>

