



# OSF HealthCare Improves Rural Care Access with Innovative eConsult Model



## THE CHALLENGE

### Care shortages meet community stigmas

**Three in four Americans living in rural areas don't have access to mental health clinicians.** This is staggering, especially given that poverty, accidents and natural disasters, and other stressors make mental health care particularly important for this vulnerable population. At OSF HealthCare, embracing technology has made all the difference in delivering high-quality services quickly to its neediest patients.

After the economic downturn, OSF's Saint Elizabeth Medical Center in rural Ottawa, Illinois, saw an influx of patients with untreated mental health and substance use disorders. Patients waited three to six months on average for an in-person psychiatric consultation, increasing the risks of decompensation and subsequent psychiatric hospitalizations. In addition, some patients were reluctant to visit a psychiatrist because of stigmas surrounding mental illness.

While OSF knew that adopting telehealth would improve care access by allowing it to source clinicians from anywhere, it went a step further. In 2017, OSF rolled out telepsychiatry at its Ottawa facility, as well as an innovative eConsult program for its primary care providers across Illinois. These two complementary components of mental health care empower primary care providers to treat behavioral health issues themselves when appropriate, helping to ensure mental health clinicians are available for patients with more severe conditions.

## THE SOLUTION

### The right level of care, every time

To bring its telehealth and eConsult programs to life, OSF turned to Regroup. A leading provider of integrated telepsychiatry services, Regroup connects health care systems across the country with the right clinicians and tools to deliver high-quality mental health care.

"Regroup has been a tremendous partner to our organization as we roll out an array of telepsychiatry options, including innovative consultative and patient treatment approaches," says Luke Raymond, manager of behavioral health at OSF HealthCare. "Regroup demonstrates a commitment to customer service, high-quality psychiatric care and effective communication."

Instead of referring every patient with mental health issues to a behavioral health specialist, OSF's primary care providers can now send questions to Regroup clinicians through the electronic health record to determine the best treatment approach. Based on the Regroup telepsychiatrist's responses, a primary care provider may prescribe medications directly to the patient or refer them for additional services as needed.

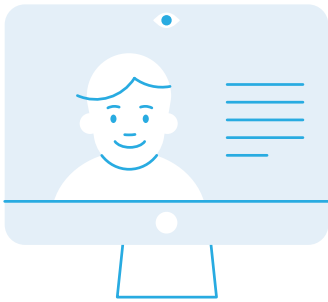
eConsults are helping to decrease psychiatric wait times by enhancing the capacity of primary care physicians to provide mental health services. In addition, eConsults make patients more likely to seek help, since they bypass the stigma of seeing a mental health clinician and are often more comfortable talking to their primary care providers. For patients who still need to see a behavioral health specialist, Regroup clinicians are providing 24 hours of telepsychiatry weekly through the secure RegroupConnect™ platform.

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"Thank you so much for the psych eConsult info. Already got a great message back from Friday, and I just sent an eConsult on another patient. This is great!"

**Family Nurse Practitioner, Holy Family Medical Center**

## POWERING CONSULTATIONS



OSF relies on the HIPAA-compliant **RegroupConnect™** platform to connect its telepsychiatry patients with Regroup clinicians securely and effectively.

- **Integrated scheduling and time tracking**
- **Patient surveys and reporting tools so OSF can monitor program success**
- **ePrescribing tools allow Regroup clinicians to prescribe medications, including controlled substances**
- **99.5 percent uptime guarantee and 24/7 tech support**

“Thanks to Regroup and its excellent providers, we have been able to reach out to our rural environments and provide psychiatry resources to those who need them the most. We are very pleased with the results of the partnership so far.”

**Cheryl Crowe, Director – Behavioral Health Services**

## THE RESULTS

### Shorter waits, happier patients

Through its partnership with Regroup, OSF is significantly expanding access to care while ensuring each patient receives the right level of services. The telehealth and eConsult programs have helped OSF to:

- **Reduce patient wait times dramatically.** Between adding Regroup telehealth clinicians and reducing unnecessary referrals through eConsults, OSF has slashed patient wait times from three to six months for in-person consultations to one week or less for telepsychiatry sessions.
- **Deliver patient and provider satisfaction.** Patients and providers agree that Regroup services are exceptional. More than 98 percent of telepsych patients give the experience high marks, while OSF providers surveyed about the eConsult program are highly satisfied with Regroup’s response times and clinical expertise, Raymond says.
- **Drive continuous improvement.** RegroupConnect offers patient data and reporting tools so OSF can monitor program success. Regroup’s deep pool of clinicians also gives OSF the flexibility to grow, with the two organizations already discussing expanding the program to new sites.

**From 4 months  
to 1 week**

reduction in  
appointment  
wait times

**98% of  
patients**

agreed they “felt heard,  
understood and supported  
by my provider in session”

**4 out of 5  
patients**

like having  
their appointment  
over live video

**Are you in need of quality behavioral health professionals?**

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