eICU Services Growing In Rural Hospitals

As part of a growing trend, rural hospitals from across the country are collaborating with larger tertiary care facilities and independent critical care monitoring providers to bring eICU telehealth services and support to their local rural communities.

Royal Philips Electronics is supporting this trend and addressing clinician shortages by expanding access to critical care support in rural communities with their. According to the Office of Rural Health Policy, while nearly one-fourth of the U.S. population resides in rural areas and approximately one-third of the country's hospitals are located in these communities, only one in ten physicians practice in rural America.

Access to eICU services is making it easier for these hospitals to attract and retain physicians and nurses. According to Todd Linden, president and CEO of Grinnell Regional Medical Center, “The eICU services we receive from Mercy Health Network in Des Moines have been instrumental in my ability to recruit an internal medicine physician to our facility, thereby bringing specialized services and expertise to our team. With the pace of change and the growing acuity of patients,” he continues, “the only way that I see for rural hospitals to maintain an intensive care unit is through an eICU Center. We can’t afford not to have it.”

By treating patients closer to home, hospitals can potentially avoid having to send them to tertiary care facilities outside the immediate area. “We need to think more broadly about approaches to achieving our shared goal of improving the health status of all rural citizens,” says Alan Morgan, CEO of the National Rural Health Association. “Initiatives like this can benefit patients and also serve to support the local revenue base and the economic stability of the hospital in their local rural communities. In some cases, these hospitals are the largest employer in the area, making stability and the need for expanded capacity even more crucial.”

Since implementing the eICU Program through Advanced ICU Care, Union Hospital has reduced ICU length of stay by 26 percent, allowing for an 18 percent increase in ICU admissions. Published data demonstrates that patient transfers from 10 small and critical access hospitals utilizing eICU services were reduced 37 percent, providing benefit to patients and their families while saving $1.2 million in associated transfer costs.

Additional news from Philips can be found here [1].

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