

Promising Practices for Strengthening Primary Care

Virtual Care Using Satellite Internet



The challenge

Remote and rural communities in British Columbia, Canada, are unable to access virtual care because they do not have internet connection.

The promising practice

Satellite internet has been implemented in eight remote communities in British Columbia, providing the internet connection needed to enable virtual care and helping to improve equitable access to team-based primary care. Satellite internet is a portable, simple to set-up solution that can bring the internet nearly anywhere at a sustainable cost.

Example impacts

More people have access to virtual care closer to home:

- 2,622 people living in First Nations Health Authority.
- 10,672 people living in Northern Health Authority.

Teams of providers can more efficiently meet needs of patients by having access to:

- video consultations with providers based elsewhere for clinical collaboration.
- patient electronic medical records and charts to review and update information in real time.

More support of well-being and work-life balance of the health workforce:

- by enabling providers to provide care virtually, from their homes or communities, when safe and appropriate to do so.

Potential future impacts:

- improved patient experiences, including culturally safe care.
- reductions in avoidable emergency department visits.

“There was a doctor that was scheduled that day for a virtual clinic but we lost power. I used satellite internet and the doctor was able to see all of his patients virtually.”

– First Nations Health Authority
Community Nurse



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Keys to success

- **Funding** investment of \$1,600, \$200 monthly.
- **Champions** to set up, maintain, and provide basic technical support.
- **Providers** to deliver care virtually when safe and appropriate to do so.
- **Flexibility** to adjust how satellite internet is used to meet community needs for virtual care.
- **Partnerships** with communities to monitor and share what's working well, what could be better, and ways to improve over time to better enable safe and high-quality healthcare.



Lessons learned

- Seek guidance from communities and providers on how best to use satellite internet to meet their virtual care needs.
- Collect and share good news stories to promote awareness, impacts and uptake.

How can I learn more?

Contact the organization.

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Why was this summary created?

Northern Interior Rural Division of Family Practice (NIRD) participated in Healthcare Excellence Canada's (HEC) Strengthening Primary Care (SPC) program. SPC brought together 20 primary care organizations from across Canada to advance practices to improve access to safe, including culturally safe, team-based primary care.

This promising practice summary was co-produced with NIRD to help others learn about their work and generate discussion about how similar approaches could be adapted and applied elsewhere.

