

Transforming Rural Healthcare Through Tele-Hospital Medicine

Creating sustainable rural hospital care delivery through an innovative tele-hospitalist program



The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) developed and expanded a tele-hospitalist model that connects experienced physicians at an academic medical center with onsite advanced practice providers (APPs) at rural hospitals. Beginning with Hampton Regional Medical Center in 2019, the model has successfully supported the opening of a new rural hospital in 2023 and expanded to a total of five rural hospitals with 24/7 physician coverage over a seven-year period.

Why is this program important?

Rural hospitals across the United States face increasing threats from: workforce shortages; low inpatient volumes; high operating costs; and hospital closures and loss of local healthcare access.

Many rural residents travel outside their communities for inpatient care, contributing to hospital instability and worsening healthcare disparities. Tele-hospital medicine provides a scalable solution that keeps care local while maintaining access to specialty expertise.

Program Results

- >1,500 patients admitted through the tele-nocturnist model (35% of total admissions)
- 24/7 physician coverage reduced care delays and improved patient and staff satisfaction
- Improved hospital throughput with shorter lengths of stay and more early discharges
- Reduced mortality and fewer interfacility transfers
- Approximately 10% cost reduction in annual savings per hospital

How It Works

Academic tele-hospitalists partner with onsite rural hospital APPs to manage hospitalized patients using video consultations, electronic medical records, secure messaging, and telehealth carts

Why It Matters

This tele-hospitalist model demonstrates that rural hospitals can remain viable while improving access, quality, and affordability of care.

The model can:

- Increase local access to inpatient services
- Reduce unnecessary transfers and outmigration
- Improve clinical quality metrics
- Create sustainable 24/7 physician coverage
- Establish a scalable template for rural healthcare transformation

For more information, visit the [program page](#) or scan the QR code.

Telehealth Centers of Excellence

