

Telehealth/Telemedicine

By Anonymous

\$15.5 Million Rural Broadband Network Grant The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has awarded a \$15.5 million grant to the Center for Telehealth and Cybermedicine Research at the University of New Mexico's Health Sciences Center to design, build, operate and evaluate the Southwest Telehealth Access Grid - a broadband network meant to serve rural areas lacking the technology. The network grid will support rural connections to more than 500 sites in New Mexico and Arizona, along with several Indian Health Service sites in Colorado, California, Nevada, Texas and Utah.

The grant will be disbursed over three years and is derived from the Rural Health Care Pilot Program, which is dedicated to establishing statewide and regional broadband telehealth networks throughout the United States. So far, the FCC has given more than \$417 million to establish such grids in 42 states and three U.S. territories. Funding is derived from the FCC Universal Service Fund Fee collected from long distance and wireless telephone subscribers to help pay for Internet service to schools, libraries, low-income populations and rural communities.

The original grant proposal, which was submitted by the Four Corners Telehealth Consortium, was one of 69 applications chosen from a total of 81. The Consortium includes directors of state-based telehealth/telemedicine programs headquartered at the Universities of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and Arizona. The Arizona Telemedicine Program (ATP) at the University of Arizona College of Medicine will receive \$875,000 for their portion of the project. ATP founding director Ronald S. Weinstein was co-author of the original proposal. "We anticipate that access to secure high-speed communications via national network backbones such as InternetZ and National LambdaRail will be important for telemedicine applications that are under development, such as three-dimensional imaging," says Dr. Weinstein.

Dale Alverson, M.D., medical director of the Center for Telehealth at the University of New Mexico's Health Science Center also commented on how the grid will allow people to switch into emergency mode for disasters or emergencies, such as a pandemic. Los Alamos National Laboratory will do computer modeling of the system in advance to test how well it would function in emergencies or disasters and look for weaknesses so builders can avoid costly mistakes. The project has five years to complete the infrastructure. Creation of a regional system of telehealth for the American Southwest is being hailed as a major step toward a nationwide broadband network for telehealth.

Ohio Hospitals Expand Telemedicine

A central Ohio telemedicine project will expand its reach in serving the southeast part of the state as well as parts of Virginia. Last year, Ohio Telemedicine formed a partnership with the Division of Neonatology at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus and the Ohio Supercomputer Center (OSC) to link neonatologists with pediatricians at Adena Health System in Chillicothe, Ohio. Physicians utilize OSC's high speed optical network, which has more than 1,850 miles of fibre, to transmit images and allow neonatologists to collaborate with pediatricians on long distance exams via videoconferencing technology. Pediatricians at Adena have utilized the connection nearly 100 times, resulting in a 50 percent reduction in patient transfers. Nationwide plans connecting to an additional hospital in Zanesville, Ohio as well as four other rural hospitals in the state later this year.

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