



Harris County Hospital District

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MEDIA RELEASE

Baytown Health Center Brings Specialty Cyber Care to Patient

HOUSTON (Aug. 2, 2006) – Traveling from Baytown to Houston for a specialist appointment can be a headache. But now, when Baytown Health Center patients are referred to a dermatologist or a psychiatrist, they don't have to travel to Houston for their appointment thanks to a new telehealth program that brings the doctor to them.

Through the use of secure interactive audio, video and other electronic media, a patient in an exam room at Baytown Health Center is connected with their doctor at either Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital or in the Texas Medical Center who provides a real-time consultation. This cyber arrangement allows a specialist to safely and effectively diagnose and treat patients remotely, saving patients and their families the inconvenience and expense of travel.

The Harris County Hospital District's Baytown Health Center has partnered with The University of Texas Medical School at Houston and El Centro de Corazon Community Health Center to develop the telehealth program, thanks to a grant from the Human Resources and Services Administration and the Office for the Advancement of Telehealth.

A specially designed monitoring station at the health center enables the dermatologist or psychiatrist to see and hear Baytown Health Center patients in real time. A trained nurse is present with each patient to assist in the exam and carry out physician instructions.

"Patients love it – it's convenient, located at their health center, and it saves time," said Ann Teske, grant project director and director of community case management. "On average patients would travel 39 miles to their specialty appointments. Now they only travel an average of 9 miles."

The Harris County Hospital District is the public health care system for the nation's third most populous county. It provides more than 1.1 million health care visits each year to uninsured, underinsured and medically needy residents of Harris County. The Hospital District operates Ben Taub General Hospital, Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital, Quentin Mease Community Hospital, 12 community health centers, a dental center, seven school-based clinics, 13 homeless shelter clinics and four mobile health units.

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