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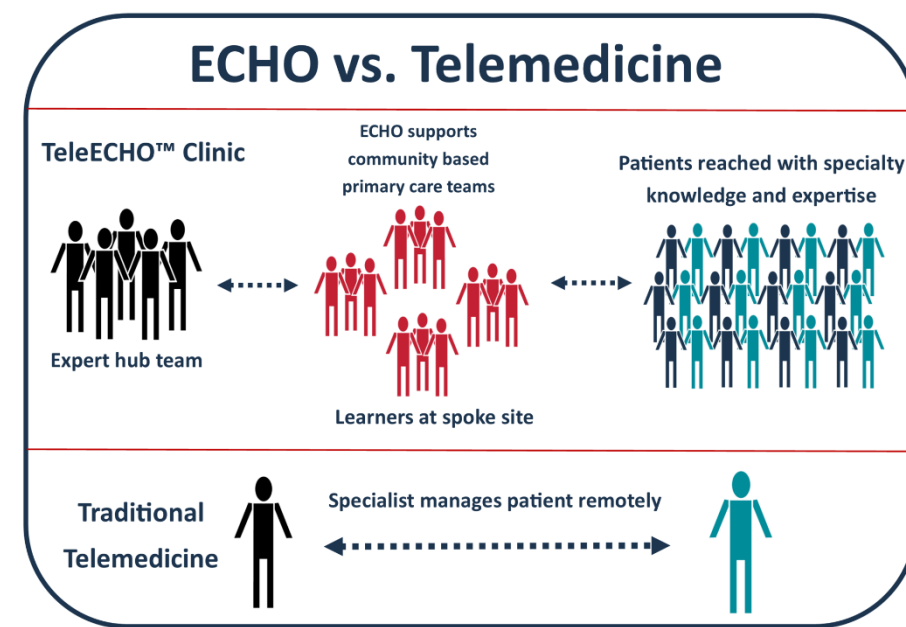
An Interdisciplinary Conversation about Hepatitis C in the North Country - CVPH Project ECHO

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Introduction

Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) is a movement to share knowledge and amplify the capacity to provide best practices for caring for underserved populations all over the world. CVPH Project ECHO is the only model of its kind in Northeastern New York.

CVPH Project ECHO's mission is to provide specialty care by moving knowledge rather than moving patients. CVPH began offering its Hepatitis C ECHO in August 2018.



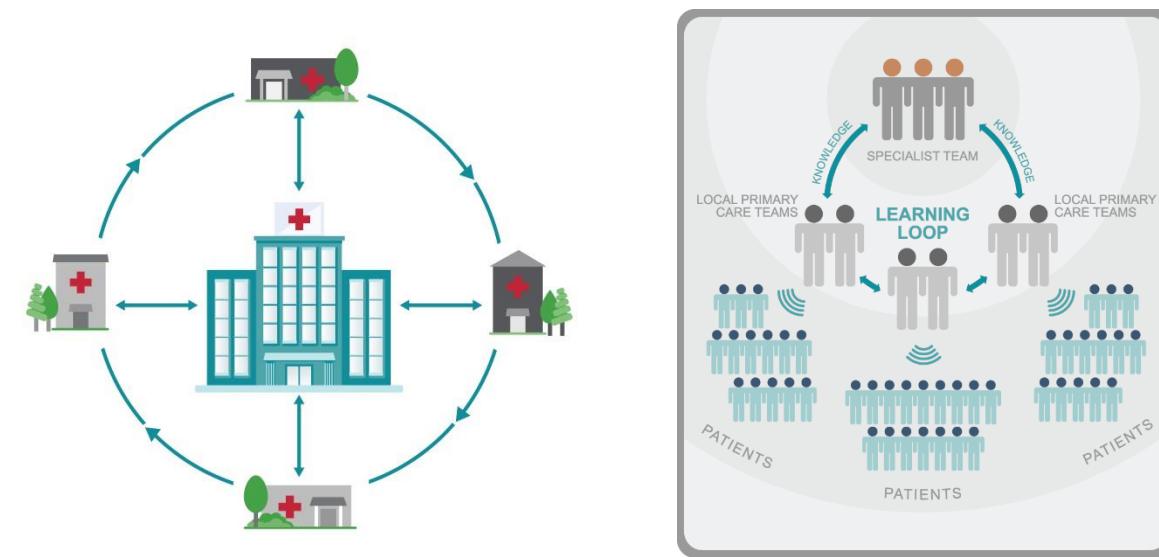
Methods

CVPH Project ECHO breaks down the walls between specialty and primary care. We've linked the expert specialist team at CVPH (the Hub) with primary care clinicians in Northeastern New York (the Spokes). Together, they manage patient cases so that patients get the care they need without having to travel. All ECHO sessions are conducted via video, using the Zoom platform.

CVPH Project ECHO has created an ongoing learning community where primary care clinicians receive support and develop the skills they need to treat Hepatitis C. As a result they can provide comprehensive, best-practice care to patients with complex health conditions, right where they live.

CVPH ECHO Impact

- Participating providers serving five counties in Northeastern New York
- 26 participating healthcare clinics
- 46 individual care providers
- Participants earn free, relevant, and engaging CME for each session attended



The ECHO Session

A CVPH ECHO session consists of:

- A 15-minute didactic, presented by one of our Infectious Disease (ID) experts at the hub site
- A de-identified case presentation by one of our primary care spoke sites
- Opportunity for other participating spoke sites to ask questions or provide insight on the case
- A step-by-step guide of how to treat the patient is then provided by our Infectious Disease expert using the Project ECHO Treatment of Hepatitis C website



Pictured at left: Jennifer Beveridge, NP; Ashley Doelger, Program Coordinator; Keith Collins, MD; and Jill Tarabula, Medical Librarian; getting ready to begin an ECHO session. Behind the team, spoke sites are visible logging in for the video session. Absent from the photo is the remainder of our Hub team: Yee Lee, Specialty Pharmacist; and Shawn Sabella, LMSW

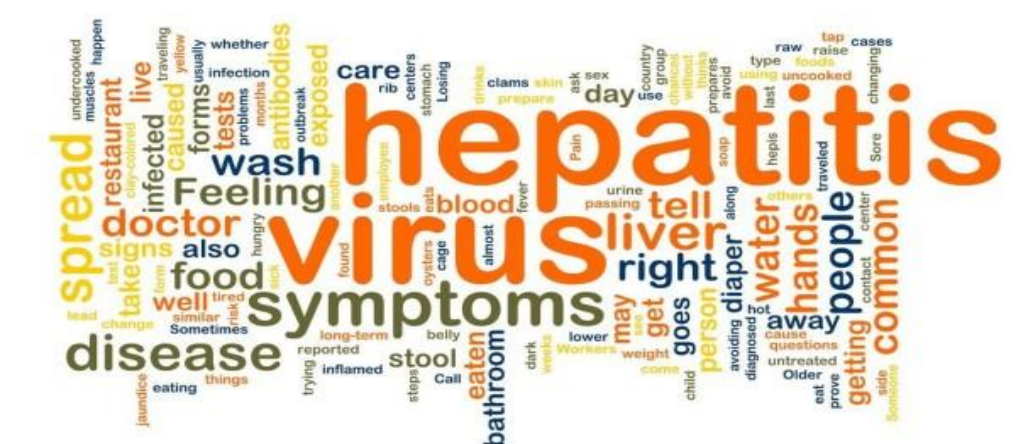
Unique Features <https://www.cvph.org/Departments-and-Programs/Project-ECHO/ECHO>

Jill Tarabula, MLS, AHIP, worked with our clinical experts to put together a resource website for our membership. Powered by WordPress (free version), the website was first created in July 2018. It started out as a home page for posting existing links to the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) and European Treatment Guidelines for Hepatitis C, and displaying the obligatory grant funding statement to satisfy federal regulations. As time progressed, it grew, hosting links to various calculators, a drug interaction checker, medication information including treatment cost comparisons, clinical trial results and related articles located in PubMed.

Since it began, the site has evolved significantly and continues to do so. In addition to the general information resources just described, the ID physician designed a staging algorithm, a pre-treatment worksheet and four treatment worksheets – one for each medication – which are all available as PDFs on the site. The site also contains details for ordering diagnostics at three local hospitals, as well as filling prescriptions at the CVPH's outpatient pharmacy, to ensure spoke providers can take care of their patients from initial diagnosis, to commencement of treatment, and on to follow-up care and clearance counseling. Finally, the website serves as a repository for recorded didactic sessions and their corresponding treatment recommendations so PCPs can review as needed. Monthly website usage stats are shared with the telehealth program coordinator to enhance grant reporting as well.



What does the future hold for the CVPH ECHO website? One of the tenets of Project ECHO is to “demonopolize knowledge” by “sharing resources, knowledge, time and talents freely across the organization, the movement and the world.” The documents created and the website maintained are in the process of migrating to the CVPH domain to improve visibility of the site for all local practitioners, and also the greater ECHO Hepatitis C Community.



Results

- Participating providers reported willingness to treat Hepatitis C in their own practice as early as the second session
- Those already seeing HCV positive patients reported changes in practice as early as the second and third sessions
- Providers reported a strong sense of collaboration and reduced isolation by being involved in the program

Conclusion

CVPH Project ECHO was successful at increasing rural primary care providers' self-efficacy in Hepatitis C testing and treatment. More time and further follow-up on case presentations are necessary to determine whether involved primary care providers have been successful at curing Hepatitis C independently.