



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**LIVINGSTON HEALTHCARE PROVIDES SPECIALTY CARE TO
LOCAL RESIDENTS USING TELEMEDICINE**

At a time when the cost of travel is increasing each week, Livingston HealthCare is finding ways to help patients get the care they need without making long trips to other facilities.

Thanks to the Eastern Montana Telemedicine Network (EMTN) specialists from Billings Clinic and other facilities can conduct patient appointments remotely using one of three telemedicine units installed at Livingston HealthCare. First setup in 2002, these units were initially used for meetings and education. Today, with support from a specially-trained nurse, they are being used for mental health consultations, oncology follow ups, and a regularly-scheduled rheumatology clinic.

“Rural and frontier residents of Montana and Wyoming face many challenges when accessing specialty medical services. EMTN utilizes telecommunication technologies to transmit real-time video, audio and medical images,” explained Lori Bigwood-Pecarina, Telemedicine RN at EMTN. “As a result, patients can remain in their communities and see specialists from Montana and across the nation. To date, thousands of patients have benefited from the care provided through this service.”

“It’s pretty amazing to have a real time conversation with the patient from so far away,” says Bruno Oliveira, MD. “I have everything that I would have at a regular exam—medical chart, labs, etc.—and a nurse has been specially trained to do a physical exam if needed. The exam takes about the same amount of time, and it saves the patient both time and money by reducing the need for long distance travel.”

Dr. Oliveira uses the telemedicine solution in several towns for follow up visits with patients. New patients or patients experiencing problems must still go to Billings Clinic to see him in person. “For patients who need a follow up or regular check in, the telemedicine exam is a good fit,” he says. “I don’t do them for

patients who are having problems or for a first exam, but if you are doing well and just need to renew medications and check in, this is a great option. I think Livingston HealthCare realizes that this is an investment in the improvement of patient care and convenience and it is going very well.”

Livingston HealthCare began offering Tele-rheumatology appointments on June 12. Patients who are interested in utilizing this service can contact Dr. Oliveira’s office at (406) 238-2900 to request an appointment. The rheumatology clinic is available on the second Thursday of the month from 8:00 – 10:00 am.

“This is a great service that Billings Clinic provides to so many rural hospitals,” says Sam Pleshar, CEO of Livingston HealthCare. “It has a very direct impact on patients, especially in a time when traveling is becoming increasingly expensive. We will continue to evaluate other specialties to see if we can expand this service in the future.”

About EMTN

The Eastern Montana Telemedicine Network began as a cooperative effort between Billings Clinic and five rural healthcare facilities to improve access to medical specialties and mental health services. EMTN now has 26 partners in 19 communities. In 2002, EMTN was a recipient of the American Telemedicine Association's President's Award for the Advancement of Telemedicine. For more information, visit www.emtn.org.