

The Benefits of Patient Monitoring at Critical Access Hospitals

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THE CHALLENGE

Critical access hospitals (CAHs) are facing unique challenges as they attempt to rebound post-pandemic, forcing them to rethink priorities to maintain the standard of care in rural populations.¹ There are several problems that continue to test CAHs, including workforce shortages, financial challenges, and clinical efficiencies.

THE GREAT RESIGNATION IN RURAL SETTINGS

Staffing shortages may be an industry-wide crisis, but the impact of understaffing is felt most severely by CAHs. There are 20 fewer physicians per 10,000 people in rural hospitals than in urban.² Similarly, a recent report found that severe staffing shortages forced 36% of CAHs to close their doors to new patients.³

Among the reasons for challenging recruitment in rural settings, staff can more easily maintain their clinical skills in urban settings.⁴⁻⁶ With limited new hires available, CAH leadership must find alternative ways to maintain high-quality care while alleviating the clinical burden on existing staff.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Payment and financial performance are among the many obstacles facing CAHs and their patients. An analysis done prior to COVID-19 on the financial viability of U.S. rural hospitals showed that 354 hospitals across 40 states were at high risk of closing, and any downfall in the economy will likely worsen these crises for CAHs.¹ Even after the Medicaid expansion, CAHs are still at a financial disadvantage when compared to their urban peers. One study found that rural hospital operating margins were nearly 3.5 times lower than urban hospitals.⁷

The capital needs of a CAH are numerous and range from replacement of infrastructure items to technology enhancements for the delivery of care. Many CAHs struggle with an aging infrastructure and fail to meet minimum needs for operation. If a CAH wishes to sustain its operation over time, access to capital is crucial.⁸

CLINICAL EFFICIENCIES

The creation of the CAH designation in 1997 provided hospitals with financial security through cost-based reimbursement to assure access to quality healthcare for people living in rural areas. Over 25 years later, challenges remain for CAHs as they attempt to resolve systematic barriers that hold them back from achieving equitable quality standards with their larger, urban counterparts.

The use of technology in rural communities can have a significant impact on clinical outcomes, but CAHs often lack the financial capital and access to the personnel needed to install and effectively maintain complex systems.^{9,10} Although the presence of electronic medical records (EMR) may not have a direct impact on clinical outcomes at CAHs, the differences in their availability at CAHs compared to non-CAHs cannot be ignored. In addition, CAHs are even slower in reaching meaningful use after implementation of the EMRs, which implies that the full value of the tool is not yet attained.¹¹ Additionally, the usage of telemedicine has shown to have important applications in underserved areas.¹²⁻¹⁵ The paradox is that CAHs are the most likely to benefit from telemedicine, but the least likely to have it.¹⁶ Policy makers may need to consider additional strategies to avoid exacerbating an already emerging digital divide.¹⁷



THE SOLUTION

To help mitigate the growing clinical burden on understaffed and under resourced facilities, CAH leaders can leverage continuous vital signs monitoring to augment staff capabilities for optimal patient care.

THE VIOS MONITORING SOLUTION

With benefits for both clinicians and patients, the Vios Monitoring System simplifies the patient monitoring process and provides around-the-clock vital signs oversight to ensure the best outcomes. Vios Remote Monitoring Services offer 24/7/365 patient surveillance by AHA-Certified technicians, giving CAH nursing staff peace of mind about their patients and their workload.

- **Benefits of Utilizing Vios at your Facility**

Vios Remote Monitoring Services benefits patients being treated in place by providing direct access to urban based specialists who can remotely review stored and real-time data for assessment. It also allows for nursing staff to tend to more critical patients while remote technicians closely monitor changes in patient status following treatment adjustments.

Vios' Continuous Vital Signs Monitoring offers an effective solution to declining in-patient capacity in CAHs nationwide, as all patient deterioration events are easily detected and can be immediately shared with a remote physician.¹⁸ By reassigning the more time-consuming and repetitive nursing tasks, CAHs can strategically allocate clinical resources to meet meet more urgent patient needs.

- **Accommodate Staffing Challenges**

Staffing challenges are among the top concerns for CAH leadership, as the standard of care directly relies on clinical capacity. The Vios Monitoring Solution provides 24/7 remote monitoring technicians to alleviate the clinical burden on staff members by eliminating alarm fatigue and minimizing responsibilities not directly related to patient care.

The Vios Monitoring System helps facilitate the rapid and unpredictable census needs of each hospital by quickly expanding or contracting with minimal set-up tasks. Additionally, CAHs can streamline patient flow through their facilities by utilizing a flexible care model, adding monitored beds when and where needed based on their mix of patient acuity needs. With automated and continuous vital signs monitoring, CAHs can deliver comprehensive clinical care without increasing their workforce.



THE SOLUTION

- **Cost-Effective Monitoring Solution**

The Vios Monitoring System was specifically designed to be a high quality, high value solution to expand or replace existing monitoring systems. Vios seamlessly integrates with existing IT infrastructure without additional start-up costs or expenditures to facilitate proprietary networks.

In addition to lowering overall operating costs, the Vios Monitoring System easily travels with each patient throughout the care continuum, enabling continued monitoring past the initial point of care to post-acute care facilities.

The Vios Monitoring System and Remote Monitoring Services can help your CAH do more with less. By expanding clinical capabilities, your nursing staff can provide a higher level of care. Learn more about how the Vios Monitoring Solution can streamline your clinical workflow, improve patient care, and protect your bottom line.





ABOUT VIOS MEDICAL

Vios Medical is a medical technology company focused on utilizing medical-grade sensors and remote monitoring services to lower the cost of care by optimizing the management of patients throughout the continuum of care. The Vios Monitoring System seeks to deliver economic benefits, improve patient outcomes, and increase clinical efficiency.

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