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Democratizing Knowledge to Improve Access to Care Globally - Project ECHO

Abstract:

Project ECHO is a disruptive innovation that dramatically improves both capacity and access to specialty care for rural and urban underserved populations. This low-cost, high-impact intervention is accomplished by linking expert inter-disciplinary specialist teams with primary care clinicians through teleECHO clinics, in which the experts co-manage patient cases and share their expertise via mentoring, guidance, feedback and didactic education. This enables primary care clinicians to develop the skills and knowledge to treat patients with common, complex diseases in their own communities which reduces travel costs, wait times, and avoidable complications. Technology is used to leverage scarce healthcare resources, and the specialists at Academic Medical Centers are better able to attend the most complex, high-risk patients. The ECHO model is not “telemedicine” where the specialist assumes the care of the patient, but instead a guided practice model where the primary care clinician retains responsibility for managing the patient, operating with increasing independence as their skills and self-efficacy grow.