

# Illinois Telehealth Network Newsletter



Vol. 3, Issue 3  
March 2019



## From the Executive Director

### New Federal Grant Award

#### \$505k Equipment Project Supports 14 Network Sites

I would like to commend our latest federal grant application team for great work in preparing and submitting a successful 2019-2021 USDA Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) grant.

Telemedicine equipment awards were announced by Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue and HSHS St. John's Hospital in Springfield, received a grant award contract last month with an award of \$429,000 for telemedicine equipment at 14 rural ITN member sites. This grant application and initiative is led by the ITN for a three-year \$504,700 project. Matching funding was provided by stakeholders and the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis Foundation.

This project brings acute emergency room and non-acute telemedicine services to 14 rural ITN member spoke sites. The sites will launch ITN's "Heroin Opioid Prevention Education (HOPE) Telehealth Network" pilot with services provided by Locust Street Resource Center (Carlinville, Illinois) and possibly other providers. The service area of this three-year project involves 19 rural Illinois counties serving a population of more than 24,000 lives.

I would like to express my gratitude to several elected representatives for their support: Senators Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth, Members of Congress Darin LaHood and Rodney Davis, and State Senator Andy Manar and Rep. Sue Scherer.

#### ITN milestones so far include:

- Beginning with our first federal telemedicine grant eight years ago, the ITN has helped secure \$3.8 million in federal, foundation and matching dollars for its members.
- We began in 2014 with 316 emergency room tele-stroke patient and neurology specialist provider encounters, and as of December 2018 have provided this lifesaving stroke care to 2,789 patients.

As a network, we are well on our way to transforming rural access to quality health care in Illinois. ITN continues to expand current (and plan new) telehealth innovations to help members improve patient access to healthcare in rural and underserved communities.

Sincerely,

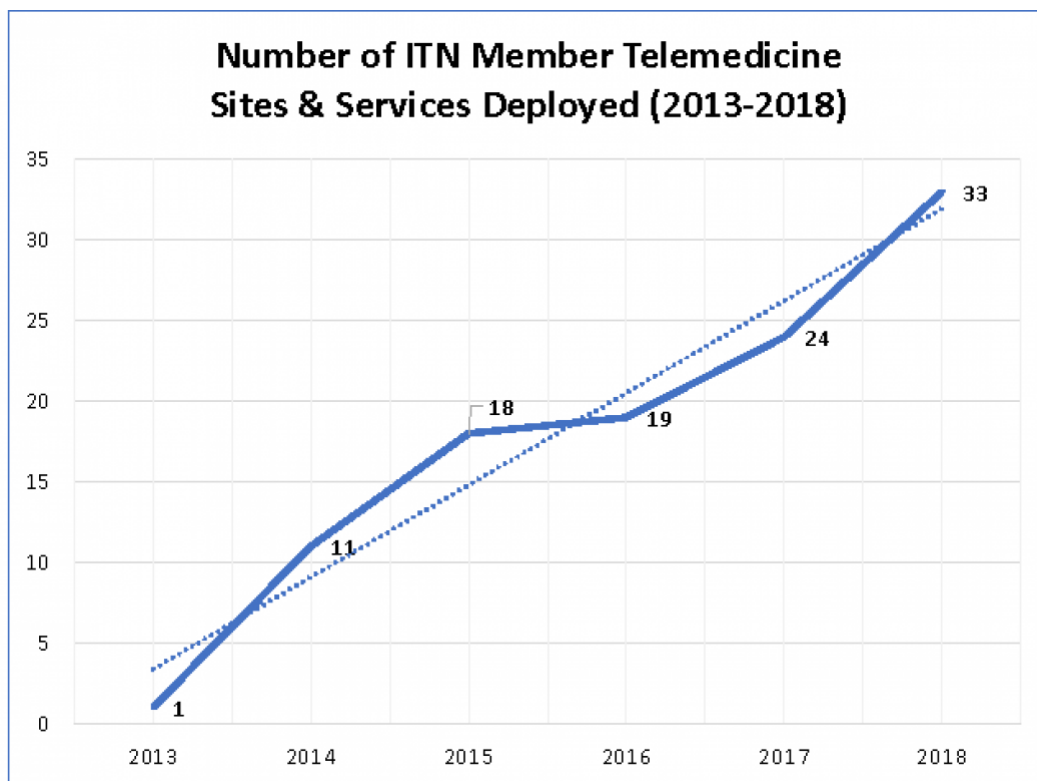
**Gurpreet S. Mander, MD, MBA, CPE, FAAP**

Executive Director, Illinois Telehealth Network (Litchfield, IL)

Chief Medical Officer, HSHS St. John's Hospital (Springfield, IL)

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## HRSA Network Development Grant Update



### Expanding Telemedicine Services & Sites

ITN members began in 2013 with just one telehealth application (led by HSHS St. John's Hospital and the Prairie Heart Institute). This application, called the Tele-Heart Pathway, supported fragile and high risk heart failure patients in their homes (after a hospitalization) with remote patient monitoring using a sophisticated tele-scale. Just five years later, ITN members have more than 33 telemedicine services and sites!

Today, network member telemedicine services include: Tele-stroke in 14 emergency rooms (serving 2,789 patients so far), inpatient tele-neurology, tele-peds, tele-NICU, tele-intensivist, tele-inpatient and EEG care and consults, inpatient tele-behavioral health, outpatient tele-behavioral health, tele-hospitalist, virtual urgent care (AnytimeCare.com), LifeNet (connecting cardiac patients in ambulances to emergency rooms with 12-lead EKGs read in real-time), tele-cardiology pre-procedure consults, and tele-diabetes care.

These new services and sites help save patient lives and improve outcomes. They also reduce travel time, increase access to care, and expedite treatment decisions (reducing delays). Approximately 1.7 million people live in the 38-county service area of the 26 ITN

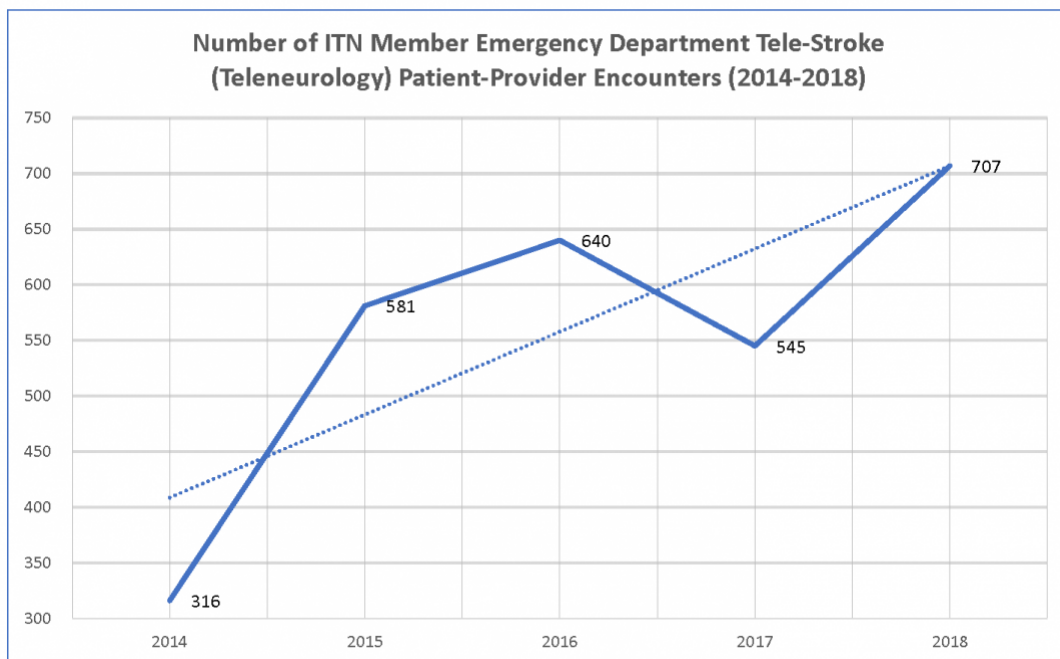
members. Increasing telemedicine sites and services helps increase patient access to specialty health care in rural underserved shortage areas. In fact, of the 26 Illinois Telehealth Network members:

- 24 are located in Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs)
- 25 are located in mental health provider shortage areas
- 12 are located in Medically Underserved Areas

To help rural network members thrive in a tough business climate, and increase available health care services to strengthen business models and improve patient care and access, ITN has three goals in three years:

1. Expand and scale current telemedicine services
2. Plan and launch new telemedicine services
3. Support long-term sustainability of all telemedicine services

ITN advances these goals with the support of HRSA Rural Health Network Development funding and technical assistance support. So far, results are exceeding all expectations. Thank you for your support.



**Member Drawdown Requests (Up to \$4,500/yr.) -- Due by July 31st, 2019**

**Telemedicine supplies costs may be reimbursed with request form & receipts**



**Annual Member Survey Due May 15, 2019**

**Identifying Pains and Gains**

Members will soon receive a survey link to update member organization telehealth-related needs and/or barriers. This survey is an annual follow up to the original

During network planning three years ago, ITN members expressed a desire to seek grant opportunities that had the potential to equitably benefit all member organizations, such as helping offset the costs of telemedicine supplies. This need was written into ITN's budget.

The ITN will offer the telemedicine supplies reimbursement opportunity again this year. Members that have paid their dues have the option to draw down up to \$4,500 (each year over three years) to reimburse their costs for telemedicine or telehealth supplies. To use this benefit, members purchase telemedicine or telehealth supplies and then submit a request form along with detailed receipts for reimbursement. Because there are limitations on what can be reimbursed with grant funds, please contact any ITN team member if you would like to confirm that a purchase is eligible for reimbursement. We ask that members submit ONE reimbursement request for all telemedicine supplies eligible for that year, and all reimbursement requests are subject to ITN Executive Director approval. Eligible supplies must be directly related to telemedicine or telehealth. Examples include:

- Comfortable furnishings or equipment cart in a patient room that facilitates a telemedicine encounter
- Any supplies (including shipping) directly related to expanding a current telehealth service, or planning or piloting a new program
- Noise suppression devices to ensure patient privacy during a telemedicine encounter
- An iPad or pc, monitor, camera, speakers, cart, table or comfortable patient seating to facilitate a patient-provider telemedicine encounter (such as tele-psychiatry or another service)
- LifeNet related emergency department expenses to support 12-lead EKGs from EMS paramedics
- Supplies may include a telehealth application or software or server configuration to support recordkeeping, privacy compliance, or to support reimbursement and sustainability

needs assessment survey completed by members since the network's inception.

- **Survey Purpose:** To help ITN staff and board members understand individual network member needs and barriers to using telemedicine. This information helps ITN focus its resources in meeting member needs (and in focusing on new grant opportunities). This is an opportunity to share pains, gains and future opportunities.
- **Confidentiality:** Your responses will be confidential, shared only with ITN staff and the board, and results of this survey will be shared with ITN members without any identifiers.
- **Estimated time:** Average completion of the survey will take 10-15 minutes. This survey was carefully designed to only elicit information that will be used by ITN in 2019-2020 to better meet your needs.

Request forms will be forwarded with confirmation of this year's member dues payment, and members may also request the form by emailing

**Julie** at [JEdwards@illinoistelehealthnetwork.org](mailto:JEdwards@illinoistelehealthnetwork.org).

Eligible expenses with receipts dated between 7/1/2018 and 6/30/2019 are due by 7/31/2019.

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## Virtual Coffee with the Network Director and Special Guest from McDermott, Will & Emery

### Opportunities for Member Input to Drive Innovation Pilots

The ITN is hosting a periodic “Virtual Coffee” series with the ITN's Executive Director and Network Director. ITN Virtual Coffees host special guests with telemedicine expertise.

The most recent Virtual Coffee session was held on **Wednesday, April 3rd at 2:00 p.m.** The ITN hosted [Lisa Schmitz Mazur](#), **attorney and partner at the law firm of McDermott, Will & Emery an international law firm with a digital health practice.** Lisa discussed informed consent for telemedicine as well as general information around the issue of documentation for telehealth reimbursement. Lisa's presentation will be available to member participants soon.

Lisa Schmitz Mazur advises health care providers and technology companies on a variety of legal, regulatory and compliance matters with a particular focus on digital health topics, including telehealth, telemedicine, mobile health and consumer wellness. We appreciate Lisa's willingness to share her time and information with us, and we are happy to announce that Lisa will be joining the ITN advisory team and will present at the ITN Annual Meeting in May!

Past Virtual Coffees have included ITN Advisors:

1. Lia Daniels, Policy Manager, Health Policy & Finance, Illinois Health and Hospital Association. Lia highlighted the past legislative session. Minutes and handouts are linked [here](#).
2. Dr. Manish Acharya, Director of Telehealth for Infinity Healthcare, works clinically in rural hospitals throughout Illinois and Wisconsin. He led a discussion on the critical importance of telemedicine in EDs and the importance of “putting a face” on what we do.
3. Becky Sanders, Director of the Upper Midwest Telehealth Resource Center (UMTRC), led a discussion on the newly released CMS 2019 Telemedicine fee schedule. Minutes and handouts are linked [here](#).



## Annual Member Dues

### **Invoices emailed; Dues match federal grant & foundation dollars**

One of the commitments that 26 CEOs made in signing onto the network [MOU](#) two years ago was to commit to paying \$3,000 in annual member dues for three years. These member dues are part of a match to leverage a federal HRSA grant to support ITN staffing to help members:

1. Expand current telemedicine services (particularly to rural areas)
2. Develop new telemedicine services (particularly in rural areas)
3. Support telemedicine program sustainability

Invoices for annual member dues for the 2018-19 year were emailed to each ITN member's primary contact on March 4, 2019. If your organization did not receive a member dues invoice, please contact Julie at [jedwards@illinoistelehealthnetwork.org](mailto:jedwards@illinoistelehealthnetwork.org).

Full-time ITN staff support network members by leading innovation pilots, sharing best practices, and equipping members in seeking grants and other philanthropy to remove barriers. Pilot programs help member organizations improve the access, coordination, quality and delivery of telemedicine services for patients.

**What tangible value do members receive in return for annual dues?** [See FAQ](#)

**Holding Down Costs:** ITN member dues were kept as low as possible, since ITN is an exceptionally rural network: Members include 28 FQHCs, 19 members in rural areas, 14 critical access hospitals (24 in Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas and 12 in Medically Underserved Areas).

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## Other happenings in your network!

[\*\*New Network Communications Plan & Marketing Plan\*\*](#)

Late last year, the ITN board approved a newly drafted Communications Plan and Marketing Plan. These plans support the ITN's Five-Year Strategic Plan (2017-2022) and are a prelude to creating a network Business Plan in July 2019.

- The **Communications Plan** helps ITN communicate with its various stakeholder groups (including members, board members, Advisors, prospective members, the public in local communities, vendor providers, and elected officials. The Communications Plan is linked [here](#) (it is not necessary to create a DropBox account to download).
- The ITN **Marketing Plan**, linked [here](#), helps guide ITN staff in focusing on and addressing member needs in the coming years, and helps the network support its own sustainability.

As with all ITN documents (strategic plan, bylaws, etc.), the board has felt it necessary to make core network documents available to the public to support other emerging rural telehealth networks.

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## 2019 ITN Annual Meeting

**Wednesday, May 14th**  
**Chiara Center in Springfield, Illinois**



Mark your calendars for the ITN's Annual Member Meeting happening again this year at the Chiara Center in Springfield. **Our keynote speaker is going to be Dr. Yulun Wang, founder of InTouch Health.**

Dr. Wang, today serving as Chief Innovation Officer of InTouch Health, is a pioneer and innovator in telemedicine, artificial intelligence and digital healthcare. Stay tuned for additional details about Dr. Wang and other exciting events we are planning for the annual meeting this year!



## AHA Report Calls for Telehealth Expansion to Help Struggling Rural Hospitals

**Report's Conclusions Affirm ITN's Mission**

The ITN commends the American Hospital Association (AHA) for its recent report highlighting the plight of the nation's rural hospitals and calling on the federal government to expand telemedicine reimbursement and financial support for new equipment. The report cites telemedicine as a critical strategy to help rural hospitals prosper despite a sometimes grim economic landscape that puts vulnerable populations at increased risk of losing access to care.

The AHA report, “Challenges Facing Rural Communities and the Roadmap to Ensure Local Access to High-quality, Affordable Care,” notes that rural hospitals are closing at an alarming rate, putting rural communities and residents in peril. The report cites telemedicine as a rural strategy that not only can support the sustainability of current hospital services, but can introduce new services that may have never been available in rural communities.

Dr. Gurpreet Mander, ITN Executive Director, commented, “The conclusions of this report affirm the ITN’s mission, which is all about enhancing rural access to care using telemedicine.” He added, “Research finds that rural Americans with more limited access to health care experience the ‘distance decay’ effect—the lower use of services with increasing distance—which can result in more advanced and higher levels of disease, and earlier onset of chronic disease.”

The ITN recognizes that rural dwellers face greater barriers in accessing emergency and urgent care. As Dr. Mander is fond of saying, “Distance should never be a barrier to technologically advanced care.”

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## Education & Networking

**American Telemedicine Association  
Conference: April 14-16 (New Orleans)**



Each spring, the American Telemedicine Association (ATA) hosts the largest telemedicine conference and educational expo in North America. This year's Expo will be held April 14 - April 16 in New Orleans. Attendees will learn, innovate, network, and return to their organizations with actionable insights, long-lasting connections, and an enhanced appreciation of how telehealth can transform healthcare delivery and access. The conference website is located at <http://www.ata2019.org/>.

ITN Members are able to register at the reduced ATA member rate. Presentations, panels and experts will address the following Education Tracks:

- **Clinical Services:** Clinical applications and clinical outcomes across the spectrum
- **Direct-to-Consumer Strategies:** Patient portals, asynchronous and synchronous services
- **Operations and Implementation:** Early and full-scale programs and service lines and how these are deployed for successful operations, long-term functionality and sustainability
- **Value (Business Strategy & Financial Management):** Demonstrated value to the entire health ecosystem

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## Upcoming: Get To Know Your Board Members

The ITN is very excited to announce that the open board vacancies have been filled. We had many qualified member representatives apply for the vacancies and we feel privileged to have such highly engaged members willing to serve as leaders for the network. In upcoming newsletters, we will introduce the board's three newest members and will provide more information about all of the ITN board members who help lead our diverse network and advance the ITN's mission and vision.

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# Upcoming Events

- **May 14, 2019** || [Illinois Telehealth Network Annual Meeting](#) (Springfield, IL)
- **July 23, 2019** || [UMTRC Inaugural Annual Conference](#) (Gillespie, IN)



## Illinois Telehealth Network

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