



How Emerus Health Found Solutions Utilizing Remote Pharmacy

As the nation's first and largest operator of micro-hospitals, Emerus, a health system with 30 facilities across the U.S., realized a need for 24/7/365 pharmacy services to assure patient safety and enhance its clinical performance and outcomes.

Emerus has an additional 25 facilities in development, so finding solutions to challenges in terms of medication safety and pharmacy services in their free-standing emergency rooms and inpatient floors led them to Avera eCARE.

"Incorporating Avera eCARE® Pharmacy helps us to maintain consistency of care across all of our facilities, and allows our local pharmacy teams to extend their capabilities and services," said Tamarah Walker, PharmD, System Director of Pharmacy for Emerus. "We use it 24/7 in some facilities, and in others at night and on weekends. We appreciate how the service is always collaborative, adding expertise to our care teams, no matter where they are or what types of cases they face."

Avera eCARE telemedicine services were created in 1993 to offer virtual healthcare support to rural, critical-access hospitals within the Avera system footprint and quickly grew to neighboring states. This innovative system quickly links partner facilities to board certified providers and highly specialized nurses at a virtual health care hub via two-way video and audio technology. eCARE Pharmacy was launched in 2009 through a grant from the Leona M. and Harry B. Charitable Trust and is one of 10 telemedicine services under the eCARE umbrella. Situated in Sioux Falls, S.D., with a second pharmacy hub in San Antonio, Texas, the eCARE clinical hub teams provide healthcare assistance to over 450 facilities across 30 states.

"We began using Avera eCARE Pharmacy in 2015, and we appreciate the wide range of benefits the service offers, and how it bolsters our pharmacy services," Walker said. "It's an obvious benefit during overnight or weekend settings, but even during times when our local pharmacy is fully staffed and open, we use eCARE to double-check





approaches and get additional opinions, allowing us to provide the best possible care.”

This collaboration includes ongoing strategic partnerships, customized to client needs, as well as antimicrobial stewardship protocols, medication review and real-time video, all via telemedicine. eCARE Pharmacy can provide the support needed to eliminate the need for new hires.

“Our pharmacy operations are often ‘one person show’ situations, since we do not employ pharmacy techs, so eCARE has proven its value and merit time and time again. It allows our onsite professionals to focus on patient care and team support,” Walker said.

“Avera eCARE Pharmacy can add expertise and multiply our capacity. It’s a big job for any pharmacist – so I know our Emerus team appreciates the extra hands and tools they receive via this service.”

In addition to pharmacist support, registered nurses can use the service any time of the day or night for reviewing medications to avoid adverse drug events (ADEs.) Clinicians can interact with the eCARE Pharmacy team to receive consultation and support as they address presenting patients – without waking a pharmacist who is not on duty.

“The assistance provided goes beyond the ED or inpatient floor, because it allows us to avoid allergy issues, it helps us with more rapid medication reviews, verifications and reconciliations,” Walker said. “Pharmacist-directed interventions and monitoring all are parts of how we use eCARE, and they combine to reduce the risk of ADEs across the board.”

To find out how Avera eCARE Pharmacy services can benefit your facility, contact us at AveraeCARE@avera.org.

