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VA and Air Force Announce Tele-Intensive Care Unit Sharing Agreement

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) [Midwest Health Care Network](#) and the [Air Force Medical Operations Agency](#) today announced a collaborative Tele-ICU agreement that will allow Air Force patients at five military treatment facilities to use VA's Tele-ICU capabilities through its centralized support center in Minneapolis.

The agreement extends to Air Force patients in Las Vegas; Hampton, Virginia; Biloxi, Mississippi; Dayton, Ohio; and Anchorage, Alaska.

The patients will be able to see VA's Tele-ICU licensed physicians — called Tele-Intensivists — and critical-care nurses through telecommunications or other electronic technologies, which include direct view of the patient through live audio and video feed; electronic monitoring; and chart review and consultations. The doctors are also able to prescribe medications, order tests or procedures, make diagnoses and discuss health care with patients and family members.

“For VA, telehealth is revolutionizing the way we practice medicine,” said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin, who also sees patients by telehealth. “Tele-ICU is more than just a way of providing remote care. We know it improves the quality of care, decreases costs by supporting evidence-based practices and it improves patient outcomes through decreased ventilator days, ventilator-associated pneumonias and reduced lengths of stay. We are pleased to partner with the Air Force in this effort.”

Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, Dr. David Smith, agreed, noting that “Collaborative partnerships, such as this agreement with VA, help us provide the best possible care to our service members, military family members and retirees who receive health care through the Department of Defense.

VA's Acting Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Poonam Alaigh, added, “This cooperation between the Air Force and VA reflects our shared commitment to caring for those who serve in our nation's military, both during their service and beyond. We are pleased to establish this partnership.”

The collaborative effort is a result of a 2015 DoD-VA Health Care Sharing Incentive Fund, also known as the Joint Incentive Fund (JIF) project. JIF was authorized by Congress as part of the 2003 National Defense Authorization Act. The intent of JIF is to facilitate mutually beneficial exchanges of health-care resources between DoD and VA, with the goal of improving access to high-quality and cost-effective health care.

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