

INNOVATOR

Honorable mention

Nationwide Children's Hospital

Division of Neonatology & Ohio Academic Resources Network

High-definition videoconferencing is a valuable tool for medical facilities in rural areas, and Nationwide Children's Hospital's Division of Neonatology is right in the thick of it.

The idea is to create a collaborative environment so that rural pediatricians can consult with hospital specialists and keep newborn patients and their families close to home during treatment, says Eric Vaughn, vice president of neonatology at Nationwide Children's Hospital.

Patients and pediatricians at Adena Regional Medical Center in Chillicothe have been benefiting from high-definition videoconferencing since January 2008. The south-Central Ohio facility was selected for the pilot program because of its reputation for referring patients to Nationwide Children's.

With the telemedicine in place, pediatricians and neonatology specialists can engage in visual consultations to ascertain a patient's condition or come up with a diagnosis. In many cases, the technology renders patient transfers obsolete, says Susan Mantey, spokeswoman for the Ohio Academic Resources Network, the networking division of the Ohio Supercomputer Center.

The resources network worked with

both hospitals, which had cameras and monitors placed in their nurseries. It also established a high-definition video connection over fiber-optic channels of the Broadband Ohio Network.

"The high-definition connection enables doctors to see each other and the patient in real-time with crystal-clear clarity," Mantey says.

Vaughn says the technology is so important is because it helps physicians battle malformations of the heart and lungs and other common problems found in newborns.

"Now we can communicate on a second's notice with our colleagues at Adena. Pediatricians who have questions about, say, a premature newborn, can call one of our board-certified neonatologists and put up an X-ray. It's as if the neonatologists at Nationwide Children's and the pediatricians at Adena are standing next to one another," Vaughn says.

Pankaj Shah, executive director of OAR-net, says the partnership between entities deserves high commendation.

"Because of this innovation, physicians can make quicker and more accurate clinical assessments," he says.

— JILL McCULLOUGH for Columbus Business First



P. Shah:
Ohio Academic
Resources Network