WASHINGTON: A Novel Idea for Mental Health Care in Rural Washington

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A hospital district in rural Washington is increasing patient access to behavioral health care. When the Columbia County Health System could no longer afford to employ an onsite psychiatrist, it adopted a new model to integrate behavioral health into its primary care services. Through a partnership with the University of Washington (UW), Columbia County medical providers receive consultation and support from UW psychiatrists. Primary care patients who screen positive for mental health issues are connected with a community social worker or UW psychiatrist, who they meet with via video conference. Columbia County social workers also offer support with insurance and housing issues, in addition to mobile outreach for people who lack transportation. With access to mental health care limited in rural areas [2], other health care systems in rural Washington have begun to implement similar models.

Spark Extra! Learn more about integrated health solutions [3].

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