

Transcript of Media-OSF Collaborates to solve psychiatrist shortages amid growing mental health demands

Psychiatrist Dr. Samuel Sears

OSF HealthCare landed on Amwell to provide support because of its reputation and its success helping much larger, well known health systems.

"If they can handle Cleveland clinic's volume and intensity, they would be a good partner for us. And then really looking at cost as well," says Dr. Sears. "We try and be good stewards of the Sister's (Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis') money and the reality is they provided us with a good competitive cost at the scale we needed with excellent quality. It was kind of a slam dunk from there." (:22)

OSF Saint Francis Medical Center is also now using Amwell tele psychiatry for other patients admitted to the hospital, including those in the ICU.

"That becomes vital having that expertise to know what medications are appropriate, what would interact potentially with other things that they're getting, especially in a you know, situation where somebody's critically ill or injured." (:15)

Dr. Sears says it's clear that even four months into using Amwell services, patients are being assessed more quickly, providers feel less stress and patients' medication is being better managed, helping prevent longer hospital stays.

"Here is a service that you only are utilizing and paying for when you need it and so this is great for our facilities, especially that don't have the volume to support a psychiatrist even if we could hire one, but that definitely meet the needs." He adds, "So this is able to support (hospitals) when they need it, as they need it, as much as they need it. And that's important because we really do look to always provide the same excellent care to every patient every time, regardless of where they live." (:24)

Danielle Bess, LCSW, lead psychotherapist at OSF Saint Francis Medical Center

Bess says before Amwell Tele-Psychiatry was deployed, patients in crisis were waiting hours to be assessed.

"Having those patients sitting in the ER waiting eight plus hours to be seen by a therapist is upsetting. You know, for anyone that works in the mental health field that has a passion for this we know that those patients need help fast. So, with those extended wait times, patients just were not getting the help that they need." (:20)

Long wait times put pressure on providers and mental health monitors who sit with patients to make sure they don't harm themselves or others.

"It's a lot to sit with one patient for eight hours to make sure that they stay safe. Some of these patients they are determined to you know, hurt themselves and that's a high stress situation for anybody to be in. It's not an easy job. So the quicker we can get them to a safe facility the better for everybody." (:19)

In turn, it also prevents longer wait times for all emergency department patients, Bess points out.

"We're a Level 1 trauma center. We need to keep those beds open in the ER and if a patient is waiting 10 hours for a mental health evaluation that clogs up that room availability so the quicker we can get them moved on (to the next level of care) that helps not only helps them, but it also helps all the other patients that need care as well." (:19)