**Telemedicine: Connecting, empowering, and transforming oncological care**

**Opportunity Overview**

The use of telemedicine is becoming more popular as a tool for monitoring cancer patients and treating the physical symptoms and side effects of the disease.¹

Telemedicine or teleoncology can be used by a central healthcare organization for outpatient consultations and case discussions between health professionals. This allows greater access to services and access to specialists for patients in remote locations.

**Business Need**

Lack of access to health care services may be one of the contributors to the disparity in survival and disease-related outcomes that exist between urban and rural cancer patients.³

A better distribution of the medical work force through virtual care is most likely to provide the greatest population-level improvement in cancer mortality outcomes.⁵

**Benefits to System**

- Increasing access to a multidisciplinary team at a cancer center (specialized consultation, management of symptoms and supervision of chemotherapy)⁶
- Efficiencies in wait time, time devoted to care, and face time with the specialist.⁷

**Benefits to Patients**

- Alternative means of access to health care
- Reduces work and school absences, travel time and costs, and therefore, total productivity costs for families.¹⁰
- Patients have felt that the doctor-patient relationship was the same as face-to-face encounters.¹¹
- Reduced pain and depression symptoms following telemedicine interventions at community-based oncology clinics.¹³

**Benefits to Providers**

Telemedicine enables physicians to perform the medical interview effectively and achieves the three main goals of doctor-patient communication¹⁴:

1. Creating a good interpersonal relationship
2. Facilitating exchange of information
3. Including patients (and their families) in decision-making.

Telemedicine is increasingly being recognized as a tool for interdisciplinary management of cancer patients and allows for¹⁶:

1. Collaboration among institutions and providers who at different locations
2. Prompt discussion of results and recommendations
3. Opportunity for professional and skill development for physicians at the remote site through interactions with colleagues at the regional cancer center