

ABOUT VIRGINIA TELEHEALTH NETWORK

The Virginia Telehealth Network (VTN) was created for the purpose of assisting the healthcare community across the Commonwealth in making quality improvements to healthcare systems utilizing health information technologies (HIT).

VTN believes that all Virginians should have access to high-quality healthcare regardless of their location — -rural, urban or suburban—and that their health information should be securely shared among providers using technologies that support safe and timely care delivery when and where it is needed."

VTN devotes its resources to advancing the adoption, implementation and integration of telehealth and related technologies into models of healthcare statewide-- and promotes the integration of health systems to support the delivery of care for all Virginians.

Telemedicine/telehealth (TM/TH) is the delivery of healthcare and clinical services from a distance using information and telecommunications technologies. TM/TH can be used for a variety of purposes, including; direct patient care, specialty consultation, remote patient monitoring and diagnostic studies, remote mentoring and supervision along with health education. Historically, electronic medical records (EMRs) were not considered a part of TM/TH applications, however, today, they are very much interrelated. As a result, the VTN also intends to focus some of its attention on EMRs-- in terms of fostering interoperability to support the exchange of data between organizations/health systems.

As a part of carrying out its mission, the VTN, on behalf of the Virginia Department of Health, is currently leading the development of the Virginia Acute Stroke Telehealth (VAST) Network. VTN chose to initially focus on improving stroke systems of care given the burden of disease and the devastation that can result in the aftermath of stroke—as it relates to a patient's quality of life and the overwhelming economic toll on society. The stroke continuum of care is being used as the framework for the design of telehealth applications and the build-out of broadband infrastructure. It is envisioned that this infrastructure will be leveraged for other clinical applications in later phases.

VAST has become the focal point for raising nearly \$5 million in federally-funded grants and state-based matching funds to help both improve Virginia's HIT infrastructure and develop a model for expediting care to stroke victims in rural communities. A pilot program has been launched in the Central Shenandoah Region to design, develop and test the VAST model. While focused in Central Shenandoah, stroke stakeholders from across the state have been invited to participate in formulating protocols and interventions.

It is envisioned that VAST pilot program will produce a viable stroke model that can be implemented state-wide. The objective is to move Virginia forward towards a fully- integrated stroke system of care as envisioned by the American Stroke Association and deemed critically important by the Institute of Medicine.

As a relatively new organization, the VTN continues to refine its operating structure and works closely with its Board of Directors for ongoing counsel and guidance. In 2008, VTN intends on applying for a non-profit 501c3 status to align with its public mission. The VTN welcomes the active interest, involvement and contribution of ideas and knowledge from organizations and individuals who share its vision for improving access to healthcare.

VTN's website at www.eHealthVirginia.org is continually being updated to keep all those interested current. Once on the site, users can register to receive ongoing updates via e-mail and make direct contact with the VTN.