



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Rural Alabama physicians go high tech

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Dr. Jason Junkins, a family practice physician in Centre, Ala., has found a way to obtain continuing medical education for himself and his colleagues without the expense of traveling or taking extended absences away from their patients.

Chuck Lail of the Office of Rural Health in the Alabama Department of Public Health learned the University of South Alabama College of Medicine was more than ready to tackle Dr. Junkins' challenge. USA has a formal telemedicine program supported by a federal grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration's Office for the Advancement of Telehealth, and had already begun pioneering the delivery of health education via distance learning technology.

Dawn Hicks, a Health Technologies Development Specialist with USA, took up the initiative and coordinated the installation of a two-way videoconference connection between the college and the Centre hospital. She also arranged for the physicians to receive formal Continuing Medical Education credits for the video conference training they attended.

The end result is that Dr. Junkins and his fellow practitioners can now routinely attend USA's continuing medical education offerings of their choosing in their own immediate area without the need for expensive travel or prolonged absences from their practices.

According to Dr. Junkins, "The convenience and cost savings of this system are enormous." He is also quick to add that he could not have achieved this without the assistance of the Office of Rural Health, which is supported by Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, and USA's dedicated staff. Dr. Junkins is so pleased with this new solution to CME training that he has offered to become an advocate to other health providers throughout the state.

During a recent grand rounds case presentation, for example, Dr. Junkins was able to participate in an informative lecture on nephrology presented by USA medical faculty. In addition to hearing the lecture, Dr. Junkins could view the bulleted and colorful graphics just as the USA residents saw them.

"It's been a tremendous benefit," Dr. Junkins, a recent USA medical graduate, said. "We lose contact with continuing education resources, particularly with academic medicine, so the impetus was for me to start my search. This is very beneficial to our small, six-member medical staff in Cherokee County. We can ask questions."

This has reached out even past the physician staff to nurses, mental health professionals, other health professionals and lay persons who might be interested in the IP-based interactive health training.

Any physician who wants more information about setting up a similar connection to USA's distance CME training is encouraged to contact either Chuck Lail in the Office of Rural Health or Dawn Hicks at USA. Lail may be contacted by telephone at 334-206-5438 or e-mail clail@adph.state.al.us, and Ms. Hicks may be contacted at 251-461-1810 or e-mail dhicks@usouthal.edu.

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