

# Premier healthcare at Cochise Regional Hospital

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Big changes are being made at Cochise Regional Hospital, and according to certified staff, patients no longer have to travel out of town for quality healthcare. During their open meet and greet with doctors and local residents, held on April 1, Cochise Regional Chief Medical Officer, Luciano Fochesatto, MD, Vice President of Finance, Christopher Alise, and President Seth Guterman, MD, debuted their use of Telemedicine.

The Telemedicine system allows board certified specialists to conduct inpatient care in Douglas, from several states away, through telecommunications. According to Guterman, this form of practice has been done at no other hospital in the nation. It is a program that is unique to Douglas.

“We’re able to access the patients, hear their concern, examine them, and look at their lab work,” Cardiologist, Dr. Stauros Maragos said. “We’re having a wonderful experience working with patients. We don’t have to ship them off to the regional center.”

Maragos, along with four other telemedicine doctors, have been working with patients via high-definition webcam, all the way from their homes in Chicago.

“This is revolutionary,” Telemedicine Dr. Kevin Dolehide, Gastroenterologist said. “I’ve been in medicine for 25 years, and I’ve never seen this. It’s easy to adapt knowing I’ll be available to someone who is hours away.”

“My whole concern when designing the system, was efficiency,” said Fochesatto. “It has been a team effort. Dr. Guterman created the empower systems, he was the visionary.”

According to Fochesatto, the system provides doctors with an electronic medical record of their patient. Through the computer they are able to view a patient’s medical history, vital signs, x-rays,



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Cochise Regional Hospital, Chief Medical Officer, Luciano Fochesatto, MD, demonstrates the hospital's new Telemedicine system at their doctors meet and greet, held on April 1.

and CAT scans, while also being able to listen to the heart and lungs, with the help of a nurse.

Since the program's launch on Feb. 1, the hospital has successfully performed 385 Telemedicine encounters.

"We are the only hospital in the country right now, where inpatient care is provided by board certified doctors 24/7 through telemedicine," Guterman said. "We're making history."

### **Nuclear Medicine and Radiology:**

A modality that is new to the hospital, Nuclear Medicine Technologist, Kevin Keene hopes to go live with the use of the department's new gamma camera, to diagnose cancers in the near future.

"It is essentially a whole body bone scan," said Radiologist Scott Anderson. "So if you have cancer, they inject you with a radioactive isotope. If cancer is detected anywhere in the body, the isotope will uptake it, and create a bright spot."

Anderson, who has been with the hospital for a couple of years, also added that Keene began working with the hospital in February, after traveling from Florida. This month the department will begin implementing scans with patients from the E.R. and acute care, to do inpatient studies.

"This bone scan is one study that Nuclear medicine does," Keene said. "It's the only one in the area, other than Sierra Vista. Not only can we do bone scans, but we can do studies that look at the heart, the lungs, the thyroid, and the gallbladder. It's going to save a lot of people from traveling."

Also on board with the hospital, is the new Teleradiologist, Dr. Michael Messing.

### **Psychiatry:**

Dr. Paul Berkowitz has signed on as the hospital's Telepsychiatrist.

"I think Telepsychiatry is a really wonderful tool," said Berkowitz. "There's a huge national shortage of psychiatrists, and so we have to find better ways of bringing this practice to the patients. It's just not feasible for all of these local patients to go all the way to Sierra Vista, and Tucson."

Berkowitz also shared his thoughts on the program itself, and his expectations of expansion. He hopes to soon be able to extend his practice to outpatients.

### **Physical Therapy:**

The new Physical Therapy department, which re-opened in January, welcomes an equally new Physical Therapist, Director, Brenden Lewer.

"We've been getting a lot of new patients" Lewer said. "We're getting recognition from some of the

hospitals in Sierra Vista, and Tucson, so they are sending us referrals.”

Lewer has been practicing since 2003, and is originally from South Africa. He specializes in everything outpatient related, working with shoulders, backs, and post-surgical preventative care. He also works with the hospitals inpatients, focusing on functionality. According to Lewer, the department is planning on opening a wellness center.

### **Cardiology:**

“I’ve been interested in computer applications of medicine for a long while,” said Maragos.” I’ve answered questions that people had about their cholesterol, or heart health, and what their risk factors are. Now this is my first with Telemedicine, and I’m very excited.”

According to Guterman, there has not been a cardiologist at the hospital in a very long time.

Maragos will be available 24 hours a day, through Telemedicine, providing a full range of cardiac services.

### **Expansion:**

Alise spoke on all of the major upgrades the facility has seen in the last year, with several more changes in progress.

“There’s still more work to be done,” Alise said on the hospital’s new emergency room “The great thing is that there will be private rooms, they’ll be spacious, and it will really be a good experience for the patient.”

Alise also mentioned that the hospital will be re-vamping its new admitting area, and waiting room. In partnership with the Department of Health Services, the new E.R. should be open in the near future.

The cafeteria will also be receiving a makeover, with revisions to the menu. According to Alise, the hospital is planning on making partnerships with local restaurants, in an effort to promote those businesses while keeping money local.

“We want to make it more welcoming,” said Alise. “If you’re here to recuperate, the food should be healthy and tasty.”

Other improvements to the wing include an overhaul of the whole registration process. Alise and his team have been working with General Electric Capital, and GE Health Care, who have upgraded all of the facility’s new equipment. The next proposed investment will be for a M.R.I. machine.

During the hospital’s meet and greet, guests could easily recognize the commitment and expertise of all of the staff, old and new. One thing remains certain, revolutionary healthcare can now be added to the

Douglas area's list of attributes.

For more information on the hospital, and Telemedicine, call 520 364-7931, or visit the facility at 2174 W Oak Avenue.