



CTeL and The Teledentists Launch Pilot Program to Reduce Dental-Related ED Costs

WASHINGTON - Nov. 13, 2024 - [PRLog](#) -- The Center for Telehealth and e-Health Law (CTeL) and The Teledentists have launched an innovative pilot program to tackle the high volume of non-emergency dental visits in hospital emergency departments (EDs); by introducing tele-dentistry kiosks to provide virtual access to licensed dentists, addressing the estimated \$1.6 billion spent annually on dental-related ED visits in the U.S.

The American Dental Association (ADA) estimates over 2 million people visit the ER yearly for dental complaints, with each visit costing about \$749—three times the cost of a standard dental appointment. Medicaid, which covers nearly one-third of these costs, bears a significant financial burden, with many of these visits providing only temporary relief for patients due to the lack of dental specialists in ERs.

"Through this program, we offer a practical, technology-driven solution to improve efficiency and reduce the cost impact on hospitals," said Christa Natoli, Executive Director of CTeL. "By enabling virtual consultations, patients can receive effective, immediate relief for dental issues while reducing repeat ED visits."

This six-month, cost-free pilot provides hospitals with access to a tele-dentistry kiosk, which allows immediate virtual consultation with licensed dentists. Key features include:

- **Cost Analysis and Insights:** A detailed review of current ER expenses for dental complaints, providing insight into potential savings.
- **Tele-Dentistry Kiosk:** Patients connect with dentists who offer timely assessments and prescribe treatment plans or medications as needed, minimizing costly follow-ups.
- **Training for ER Staff:** Participating hospitals receive training to ensure smooth integration of tele-dentistry workflows.
- **Improved Patient Pathways:** Patients are treated virtually or referred to appropriate providers for follow-up, reducing repeat ER visits.

With nearly 40% of Americans lacking dental insurance, many individuals only seek emergency care when dental issues become severe. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) underscores that inadequate access to dental care leads to higher risks for chronic health conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes. By making preventive dental care more accessible, the program aims to mitigate these risks and reduce unnecessary ER use.

"Our vision with this pilot is to empower ERs with an effective solution for managing non-urgent dental complaints," said Dr. Maria Kunstadter, Founder of The Teledentists. "Tele-dentistry not only helps to save costs but also provides patients with a clear path to the follow-up care they need."

Together, they hope to expand this program to other hospitals across the country, with the long-term goal of establishing tele-dentistry as a key strategy to manage dental emergencies. Research shows that for every \$1 invested in preventive dental care, \$50 is saved in avoided emergency treatments, indicating the program's potential for significant impact.

For more information visit, www.ctel.org.

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