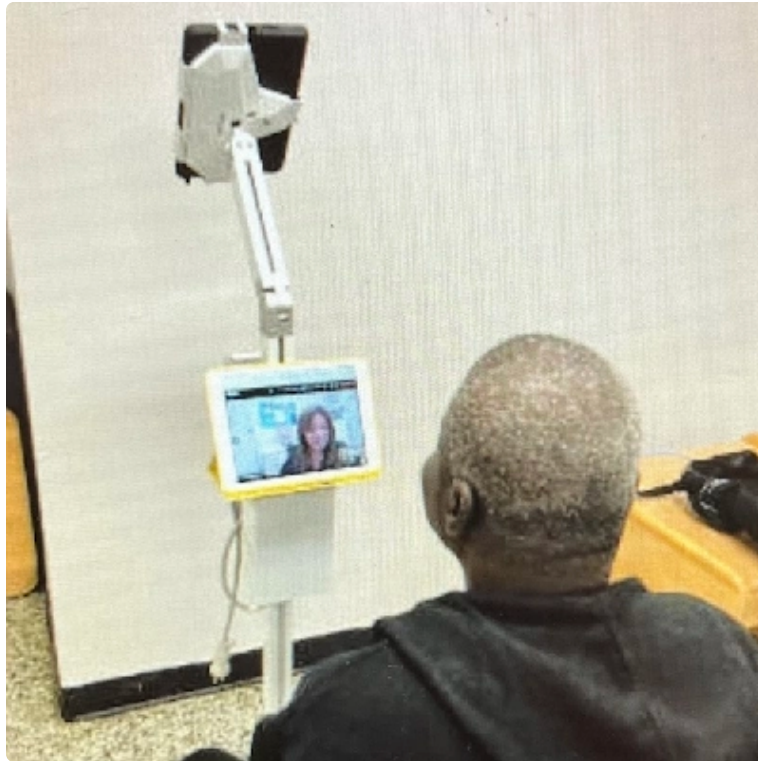


Telehealth Stations Bring Urgent Medical Care to Homeless Shelters



A homeless patient at a Bronx shelter participates in a telehealth visit with nurse practitioner Gabriella Shankman, RN, as part of the Community Medicine Program—Family Health Centers at NYU Langone.

The Family Health Center deploys the first network of telehealth kiosks in homeless shelters, making virtual visits accessible to New York City’s most vulnerable.

The care team at the [Community Medicine Program—Family Health Centers](#) at NYU Langone has a motto: “We meet patients where they are.” The phrase is as much practical as it is inspirational—for the past three years the program has provided vital virtual healthcare services to homeless people.

Today, the demand for its services has never been more urgent. More than 60,000 people in New York City sleep in shelters each night, and many require medical attention. An estimated one in seven homeless people in the city has a “severe mental illness,” and a disproportionate number have other chronic health problems, according to the Coalition for the Homeless. Yet only 10% of the city’s homeless shelters have onsite medical programs.

To bridge the gap, the Community Medicine Program (CMP), a department within the FHC, has established the first network of telehealth stations in city-run shelters to treat homeless patients virtually. Since its launch in July 2020, the program has conducted more than 700 telehealth medical visits across nine locations in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx. “We are using technology to help these vulnerable people get crucial medical care,” says internist [Radeyah Hack, MD, MPH](#), who designed and codirects the program with adult psychiatrist [Jeffrey Bouchard-Burns, MD](#). “That’s something no other organization has done.”

The Family Health Centers provides primary and preventive outpatient care to more than 100,000 adult and pediatric patients, regardless of their ability to pay, at eight locations in Brooklyn. To further extend its reach, the CMP collaborated with the NYC Department of Homeless Services and NYU Langone’s Virtual Urgent Care team to deploy special iPads with software equipped for secure video visits at shelters throughout the city. The CMP sends patient navigators and Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselors to set up the equipment in private, dedicated rooms and to facilitate visits. “We immediately saw the benefits of getting patients in front of virtual technology,” says Dr. Bouchard-Burns.

The virtual visits operate through two initiatives. The first, called “Nurse in Shelter,” operates a shelter in Brooklyn and the Bronx, with a Randall’s Island site set to launch in January. A second program serves mentally ill patients in three St. Francis Friends of the Poor supportive housing facilities in Manhattan. For these St. Francis locations, the CMP team has created a hybrid model: they provide onsite medical care for half of every month and telehealth visits for other half. To date, the program has conducted 370 telehealth visits with the St. Francis patient population.

“We have developed a new way to reach this population, which desperately needs our help,” says Dr. Hack. “For us, it’s about thinking outside of the box and figuring out how to best meet the patients.”

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