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Duke Endowment Grants \$750,000 to Mental Health for Telepsychiatry

The Trustees of The Duke Endowment approved an additional grant of \$750,000 to the South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) to continue its successful Telepsychiatry Emergency Department Consultation Program.

To meet the critical shortage of psychiatrists in South Carolina's underserved areas, and assist hospital emergency rooms provide appropriate treatment to persons in a behavioral crisis, SCDMH utilizes real-time, state-of-the-art video-and-voice technology that connects SCDMH psychiatrists to hospital emergency departments throughout South Carolina, 16 hours a day, seven days per week. Hospital emergency department consultations with SCDMH psychiatrists have increased the quality and timeliness of triage, assessment and initial treatment of patients; reduced many individuals length of stay in emergency departments; and allowed participating hospitals to direct critical personnel and financial resources to other needs; thus, realizing financial savings for hospitals.

An ongoing study of the Program's impact on medical costs by the University of South Carolina School of Medicine determined that there is an overall medical cost savings of over \$1,500 per episode of care for patients receiving a SCDMH telepsychiatry consultation. Another finding of the ongoing study is that patients discharged following a SCDMH telepsychiatry consultation had a significantly higher rate of accessing mental health aftercare in the community, thereby reducing their risk of readmission to an emergency department.

Since March 29, 2009, SCDMH has completed approximately 16,000 telepsychiatry consultations with hospital emergency departments. The SCDMH Telepsychiatry Consultation Program currently provides comprehensive consultations to 18 South Carolina hospital emergency departments.

This innovative statewide program is made possible through a series of grants from The Duke Endowment, headquartered in Charlotte, NC. In addition to the support of The Duke Endowment, SCDMH is assisted in the program by the SC Department of Health and Human Services, and the USC School of Medicine. With the support of Governor Nikki R. Haley, SCDMH also received funding to support the Program from the South Carolina General Assembly. Participating hospitals also pay a modest user fee for the service.

The South Carolina Department of Mental Health's mission is to support the recovery of people with mental illnesses, giving priority to adults with serious and persistent mental illness and to children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances. The Agency serves approximately 100,000 citizens with mental illnesses, approximately 30,000 of whom are children and adolescents, and provides outpatient services through a network of seventeen community mental health centers and numerous clinics. It also operates four hospitals, one community nursing care center, and three veterans' nursing homes.

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