

Case Study



In person is preferable. But it is better to wait just three weeks for a telemedicine consult than six months for an in-person consult.

The Challenge

Providing evidence-based mental health care in a cross-cultural context to children.

Dr. Peter Braunberger, based at St. Joseph's Care Group, works collaboratively with the Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) in Toronto and Dilico Anishinabek Family Care (Dilico) in Thunder Bay, where he lives. Working with four First Nations' child mental health services affiliated with almost 100 First Nations, spread across a 500,000 square kilometers region, he is an experienced telemedicine practitioner. His challenge has been to provide evidence-based mental health care to children in a cross-cultural context.

The Solution

A shared-care mixed model using telemedicine.

In addition to his collaboration with SickKids and Dilico, Dr. Braunberger works closely with several services funded by the Ministries of Health and Long-Term Care and Children and Youth Services. He has formed partnerships with pediatricians, as well as shared-care relationships with family doctors in the region. Dr. Braunberger also works with community-based conceptual teams that may include a mix of parents, elders, social workers and other culturally-sensitive adults.

According to Dr. Braunberger, effective mental health care for children includes family, friends and culture, where wellness is found in the big picture, not just medications. The big picture for First Nations encompasses providing, at the invitation of the community, culturally safe care. It takes local context into consideration to prevent inappropriate recommendations, thereby earning the trust of those involved in the shared-care process. Dr. Braunberger noted that earning trust takes time. There is no quick path.

Before the advent of telemedicine, children in his care would be flown south to Thunder Bay for psychiatric care. They were distanced from their family and culture. Telemedicine allows First Nations children under his care to live with their families and attend follow-up appointments accompanied by family members or other adults who are sensitive to the nuances of the culture within which the child lives.

“Wellness is found in the big picture, not just medications.”

The Benefits

Telemedicine maximizes the treatment time a patient spends within familial and cultural contexts

Telemedicine does not completely eliminate the need to travel to Thunder Bay for treatment. However Dr. Braunberger has found that, on average, two out of three appointments can be facilitated by telemedicine. Dr. Braunberger accesses OTN’s secure telemedicine network from a desktop system in his office, eliminating travel time to access a Telemedicine studio. This allows Dr. Braunberger to maximize the time he can spend with young patients, and to increase the number of patients he can see.

“In-person is preferable,” said Dr. Braunberger, “But it is better to wait just three weeks for a telemedicine consult than six months for an in-person consult.”





“Earning respect and trust takes time. There are no short cuts.”

Advice to New Users:

Take time to build confidence through learning not knowing.

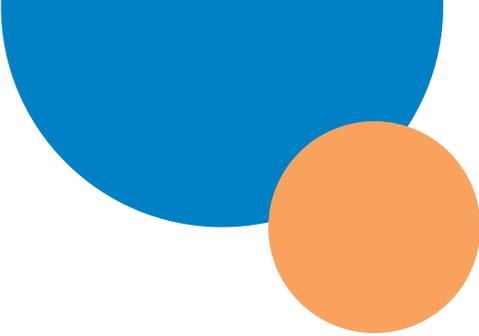
Telemedicine enables newcomers to cross-cultural practice to meet with elders and other community caregivers more easily, reducing travel time and costs. As Dr. Braunberger notes, this gives us more opportunity to wear our “learning hat” rather than our “knowing hat”, “ A mutually respectful relationship is extremely important, given that the degree to which a physician is invited to provide care is defined by the community.

The interview with Dr. Braunberger was conducted using OTN's secure Personal Videoconferencing service.

Dr. Peter Braunberger

Dr Braunberger has been practicing child and adolescent psychiatry in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario since 2005 when he completed residency at McMaster University. Dr Braunberger's practice has involved a mix of outpatient and inpatient care in Thunder Bay and the wider region. Based from St. Joseph's Care Group Thunder Bay, Dr Braunberger consults to four regional Aboriginal Child Protection and Child Mental Health agencies. As well, Dr Braunberger has taken on the role of Liaison with Aboriginal Communities with The Hospital for Sick Children (Toronto) Telelink Mental Health Program. Initially with Dilico Anishinabek Family Care, and then regionally, Dr Braunberger has developed a “mixed model” child and adolescent psychiatry service (CAPS) including shared care, telepsychiatry and program consultation. Dr Braunberger also consults to regional youth court, eating disorder and substance misuse teams. He has two small research grants addressing eating disorders in Aboriginal youth. Dr Braunberger is an Assistant Professor with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, and Chair of the Advocacy Committee of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.





Personal Videoconferencing for Your Health Care Practice

Personal Videoconferencing is secure, safe and reliable, and is subject to Ontario's Personal Health Information Act (PHIPA) and Canada's Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA). The service is state-of-the-art with privacy protocols that meet or exceed provincial and federal standards.

Patients do not pay additional fees. Physicians may bill OHIP for telemedicine at a premium.

Training and support are provided to Personal Videoconferencing adopters. OTN is a recognized provider of health care distance education. That skill and experience are applied to all online Personal Videoconferencing training modules. Experienced OTN staff provide support to all users.

As the world leader in telemedicine, OTN helps Ontario get more out of the health care system, bridging the distance of time and geography to bring more patients the care they need, where and when they need it. Using innovative technology OTN streamlines the health care process, while also expanding the way knowledge is shared and how the medical community interacts with each other and with patients. The efficiencies achieved help health care budgets go farther. Funded by the Government of Ontario, OTN is a not-for-profit organization. For more information, go to www.otn.ca