

Case Study



The business of building a cost-effective practice with Personal Videoconferencing.

The Challenge

Cost-effective practice expansion.

About six years ago, Dr. Joel Isenberg changed the focus of his practice from Internal Medicine to Addiction Medicine. His goal was to provide specialist care to a region of Ontario that was woefully underserved, and hundreds of kilometers away. His challenge was to expand his practice in a flexible, cost-effective manner to Northern Ontario far from his business base in Vaughan, a suburb of Toronto.

The Solution

Personal Videoconferencing, the next generation of telemedicine.

Changing his practice required a significant IT infrastructure investment, including the installation of a room-based telemedicine studio in his clinic in Vaughan. His Vaughan studio could now connect with remote room-based telemedicine sites in Northern Ontario. As Dr. Isenberg explained, investing in telemedicine hardware is no different, *“than purchasing a desk for a secretary, magazines for the waiting room and tables for the examination room. It is the cost of building a practice.”*

While growing his business, he spent one week a month in Northern Ontario conducting in-person consults. The remainder of the month, his consults were conducted from his studio in Vaughan. As his practice grew, he established his own clinics, each equipped with a telemedicine studio.

Dr. Isenberg’s telemedicine protocols did not change when he joined the Personal Videoconferencing pilot project. He still ensured that new patients were seen in-person at least once, and no later than the third visit. He still used his room-based studio in the Vaughan office. When he added the Personal Videoconferencing service to his suite of tools, however, he added an associate physician

“Personal Videoconferencing enables me to expand my practice cost-effectively.”

who uses the service to conduct telemedicine consults. Dr. Isenberg was able to double his practice cost-effectively, because an investment in the Personal Videoconferencing service and equipment is approximately \$3,000, substantially less than a room-based system, which can cost as much as \$35,000.



“Personal Videoconferencing made telemedicine more flexible.”

The Benefits

Maintaining a balanced lifestyle

When he switched to Addiction Medicine, Dr. Isenberg's personal life was firmly entrenched in Southern Ontario, however he saw an opportunity to respond to an unmet need in Northern Ontario. Investing in telemedicine allowed him to maintain a balanced lifestyle, while successfully expanding his practice.

Advice to new users:

The patient as TV star

Dr. Isenberg cautions that there will be patients who will prefer an in-person consult over a telemedicine consult. Others, however, will embrace the technology enthusiastically. He recounted the excitement of a patient, who remarked, "Hey, you are a TV star." To which Dr. Isenberg responded, "No, you are the TV star."

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



Dr. Joel Isenberg, MD, FRCP(C)

Dr. Joel Isenberg graduated in 1983 from McGill University with his M. D. C. M. He completed his residency in internal medicine in 1986 and his geriatric fellowship two years later. From 1998 to 1993 he was a geriatric consultant in Toronto. From 1993 to 1999 he expanded his practice to Israel. From 1999 to 2008, he practiced as an internist and general practitioner in Chapleau, ON. Currently his practice focuses on methadone medicine in Timmins, Kirkland Lake, Cochrane and Chapleau.



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 healthcare 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 healthcare 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