

PSYCHIATRIC PHARMACISTS: TELEHEALTH FOR RURAL VETERANS

Blazing a Trail in Colorado

Dr. Jeffrey Gold is a psychiatric pharmacist and the psychiatric pharmacy residency director at the Veterans Affairs (VA) Rocky Mountain Regional Medical Center in Denver, Colorado.

When Dr. Gold started as the health system's first psychiatric pharmacist, he had weekly meetings with the chief of psychiatry for supervision and mentorship. Optimizing his role on the team proved so successful that the health system created new positions over the next 12 years and now employs nine psychiatric pharmacists.

Dr. Gold has earned the trust and respect of the medical staff, and he was the first non-physician to win the James Shore, MD, Teaching Award at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry.

Expanding Access with Telehealth

Dr. Gold now focuses on treating veterans with mental illnesses who live in rural areas. He meets with about 30 veterans per week to manage their psychiatric medications for a broad range of conditions.

Based in Denver, Dr. Gold meets and provides direct patient care to veterans via telemedicine—remotely, face-to-face over a computer screen. Patients travel to VA community-based outpatient clinics in rural Colorado where there are nurses, therapists, and case managers who assist patients in connecting with Dr. Gold.

Patients are so grateful to have psychiatric medication management services available to them close to home that any discomfort of talking to someone over a computer screen quickly dissipates. They come ready to talk and work on some difficult personal issues.

With this telehealth model, Dr. Gold is playing his part in a modern treatment team. He collaborates closely with other mental health team members to clarify diagnoses and discuss complex medication regimens.



“The psychiatric pharmacist brings expertise in psychopharmacology and the psychiatrist brings an in-depth understanding of making diagnoses and treatment planning — **when we work together patients have improved outcomes, safety, and quality of life.**”

-Lisa Smith, MD
Medical Director
Outpatient Mental Health

IMPROVING ACCESS AND OUTCOMES

Psychiatric pharmacists have a solid foundation in how medications work and how they interact with other drugs and diseases. They rely on scientific evidence to help develop safe and effective medication regimens, and they are well-versed on the importance of empathy.

Dr. Gold works closely with patients to better understand their experience with medications. He explains that every time a person takes a medication, “they think about the person that gave them that pill.” In fact, research confirms that a therapeutic relationship between a patient and their health care provider improves medication adherence and improves their response to the medication.



118

Veteran visits per month conducted by Dr. Gold, increasing access to medication management services.



85%

of patient visits completed via telehealth



1900+

medication interventions per year, where medications are started, stopped, or changed

“Dr. Gold is an amazing asset to our rural VA clinic. His **knowledge, empathy, and genuineness** is very much appreciated by the staff and the veterans he serves.”

- Donald P. Romero, Licensed Professional Counselor Program Coordinator, Alamosa VA Clinic, and Veteran

Supporting a Community

Dr. Gold is well-respected as a local psychiatric medication expert. He provides education for hospital staff regarding new medications and participates in specialty clinics for people with major depressive disorder and bipolar disorder who have not had a good response to treatment. He speaks to Veterans’ groups, homeless shelters, high schools, and legal organizations in the community.

Success Story

Dr. Gold recently cared for a Veteran who was taking multiple medications that resulted in a serious drug interaction. He worked with the patient and his treatment team to develop a better regimen that ultimately cured his hepatitis C.

The patient’s schizophrenia symptoms improved, and he noticed that he was able to think more clearly on fewer medications.

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