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*Strategic Health Care News*

## North Dakota Telepharmacy Project Serving as Model for Other States

A North Dakota telepharmacy project that began in 2002 has begun serving as a model for 19 other states seeking to implement telepharmacy services; the North Dakota project started with 10 volunteer sites and has expanded to 67 sites. Eleven states — Alaska, Idaho, Illinois, Montana, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Wyoming, and the District of Columbia — have passed laws to enable the establishment of telepharmacies.

The North Dakota telepharmacies are staffed with registered pharmacy technicians and stocked with a supply of commonly prescribed medications. Teleconferencing equipment links the remote technician to a pharmacist in a hub site. The pharmacist is able to see the original prescription, and observe all aspects of filling the prescription. Before medication is dispensed by the technician, the pharmacist consults privately with the consumer via the teleconferencing link. The North Dakota telepharmacies accept e-prescriptions.

The North Dakota project coordinator said a telepharmacy site costs about \$18,000 to set up, which covers the audio and video computer teleconferencing equipment and installation, as well as a year of Internet service. Each site pays an annual licensing fee of \$175. Pharmacists licensed in North Dakota seeking to develop telepharmacy services may be eligible to receive financial assistance with the start-up costs through a federal grant from the Department of Health and Human Services' Office for the Advancement of Telehealth.

The College of Pharmacy, Nursing, and Allied Sciences at North Dakota State University administers the telepharmacy project and provides technical assistance. A "How-To" guide that describes implementation steps to establish a telepharmacy program may be viewed on-line at <http://telepharmacy.ndsu.nodak.edu/publications/TELEPHARMACY-TAD1.pdf> (accessed October 14, 2008).

*For more information, contact: Ann Rathke, Telepharmacy Coordinator, College of Pharmacy, Nursing, and Allied Sciences, North Dakota State University, 123 Sudro Hall, Fargo, North Dakota 58105; 701-231-5863; E-mail: [Ann.Rathke@ndsu.edu](mailto:Ann.Rathke@ndsu.edu); Web site: <http://telepharmacy.ndsu.nodak.edu/>.*

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