

Rural clinics increasingly turn to telemedicine

June 6 2014, by Regina Garcia Cano



In this March 28, 2014 photo South Dakota rancher Tom Soukup looks at a video monitor at a hospital in Wagner, S.D., that connects its clinic with Avera Health physicians in Sioux Falls, SD. The 72-year-old was badly injured four years ago after being pinned against a wall by a cow on his Wagner ranch. When Soukup arrived at the clinic in Wagner the doctor on duty used Avera's telemedicine network to connect with Sioux Falls doctors who talked him through treating the rancher's injuries. (AP photo/Jeremy Waltner)

Doctors across rural America are increasingly seeking help in emergencies from video services that let them connect with hospitals in bigger cities.

Telemedicine systems allow small-town physicians to reach out to more experienced specialists when an urgent case lands in their clinics. The video link allows the two [doctors](#) to work together as if they were in the same room.

Although telemedicine has been around for at least two decades, the practice is fast becoming a standard feature in many communities, even as other public services such as police and fire protection decline.



In this March 28, 2014 photo Tom Soukup opens a gate inside the barn where he was pinned to a wall by a cow on his Wagner, S.D., ranch. Soukup, who was badly injured in the accident, was rushed to his local hospital where his small-town physician was able to use South Dakota-based Avera Health's Telemedicine system to reach more experienced specialists to help treat his injuries. (AP Photo/Jeremy Waltner)

South Dakota-based Avera Health has a telemedicine network that includes 86 hospitals in seven states in the West and Midwest. It expects to have contracts with 100 facilities by the end of the year.



In this March 28, 2014 photo Tom Soukup stands in a feed lot on his Wagner, S.D., ranch. Soukup, who was badly injured four years ago in a ranch accident, was able to use South Dakota-based Avera Health's Telemedicine system which allowed his small-town physician to reach out to more experienced specialists by video link to treat his injuries. (AP Photo/Jeremy Waltner)

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