

CQCH Is Bringing Specialty Care for Hepatitis C to Southern Arizona

Over the past few years the healthcare community has observed a huge increase in the number of patients with the hepatitis C virus, and the alarming rate of growth is no different in Southern Arizona. To help those patients in our community manage their long-term chronic care needs, Copper Queen Community Hospital (CQCH) joined forces in 2013 with St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center Phoenix as part of Project ECHO (Extension for Community Health Outcomes).

Hepatitis C is an infectious disease affecting primarily the liver and is caused by the hepatitis C virus. Chronic infection can lead to scarring of the liver and cirrhosis. In some cases, the cirrhosis will go on to develop liver failure or liver cancer, or other esophageal or gastric conditions. The ECHO program takes advantage of a grant from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to safely and effectively treat chronic, common and complex diseases in rural areas and to monitor outcomes of this treatment.

Most rural and medically underserved communities do not have experts in hepatitis C. This Tele-Medicine program helps CQCH successfully treat more patients by assisting and counseling our local physicians and other providers. Each week our providers teleconference with the Phoenix experts to confer on our hepatitis C patients and discuss treatment options. The Phoenix specialists also provide continuing education to our local providers.

Hepatitis C patients often need weekly blood work and to be seen by a specialist on a monthly basis. Through the ECHO program, these patients are treated locally rather than traveling to Tucson for blood work and treatment. Their continuity of care also is improved as our local provider can treat their other ailments.

We think this program is a way to bring education opportunities to our local providers and improve the healthcare options for our patients, allowing us to offer one of the best medical programs available in treating hepatitis C.



James J. Dickson is the Chief Executive Officer of Copper Queen Community Hospital (CQCH), Bisbee, Arizona. Dickson has overseen the expansion of CQCH from a struggling facility to a profitable and nationally recognized rural healthcare

network with Rural Health Clinics in Bisbee, Douglas and Palominas. Dickson has spent the past 20 years working with critical-access hospitals. Mr. Dickson is the 2011 winner of the American Hospital Association's (AHA) Shirley Ann Munroe Leadership Award. Dickson also recently received honors from the Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association and the Arizona Rural Health Association. CQCH is a 14-bed acute-care center offering a full range of services and is in the final phase of a construction and expansion project that includes the Emergency Department and ancillary services. It is a Level IV Trauma Center and uses Tele-Medicine technology in cardiology, stroke, neurology, trauma, burns and radiology.

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