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Distance to Cure

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Distance to Cure
A three-part television series by Casey Capachi
www.distancetocure.com

Abstract

How far would you go for health care? This three-part television series, featuring two introductory segments between each piece, focuses on the physical, cultural, and political obstacles facing rural Native American patients and the potential of health technology to break down those barriers to care.

Part one, *Telemedicine: A bridge to better health care for Native Hawaiians*, investigates the health disparities facing rural Native Hawaiians, the obstacles they face accessing health care, and how telemedicine can help connect them to doctors who would otherwise be out of reach. The piece visits the Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center serving the surrounding Native Hawaiian population and the Telehealth Research Institute at the University of Hawaii where doctors are working to implement telehealth programs in rural clinics. An invention called the iCare ExamCam designed for patients who are unable to leave their home is featured along with a patient who stands to benefit from the convenience of telemedicine.

Part two, *The psychiatrist can see you now... from one thousand miles away*, looks at the need for mental health services on the Navajo reservation in Arizona and the distance they must travel to reach the nearest psychiatrist. Reservations, along with battling high rates of mental health issues, also have the added challenge of finding psychiatrists who are able or willing to live in rural areas. That is where telepsychiatry can help, say Indian Health Service psychiatrists, who are now able to reach patients on even the most remote reservation with today's technology.

Part three, *Seattle: Transforming the landscape of health technology*, begins at the annual conference hosted by SACNAS, an organization committed to promoting Native Americans and Chicanos in the sciences. Across town at the University of Washington, researchers are working on health interventions specifically designed for rural Native American patients from multimedia storytelling projects for cancer prevention to an HIV/AIDS prevention and intervention online game. This segment also looks at a program that the University of Washington participates in called Project ECHO. With Project ECHO, tribal clinic doctors can get advice on how to treat their most complex patients from specialists hundreds of miles away through video conferencing.

The series also goes into how Native Americans across the country are addressing health disparities in their own community in innovative ways and how they envision the future of health care for themselves.

Casey Capachi received the 2012 Kaiser Permanente Health Policy Journalism Fellowship from the Kaiser Institute for Health Policy to report this series.

For more, please visit the project's website at www.distancetocure.com.