

Kelly Bennett, M.D.

How was the free clinic able to stay open during the pandemic?

00:05

The world fell apart, we got back here. And we were like, well, this is this is odd, but we'll just, we'll just continue on. And we had actually called upper level medical students to make sure they could come. And then you know, it came down, slam, everything's closed, the medical students are gone. So we were like, Ah, so it took us about two weeks of crying, and gnashing of teeth to go, this obviously is gonna be a long standing thing, and we have to have a plan. So because we had already started doing some telemedicine in, our Department of Family Medicine even before the pandemic, we were starting to come out with that we moved to telemedicine appointments within a week. I mean, it was a very quick process. And we started with zoom and then use some other softwares that do that also with HIPAA regulations. So I knew it could be done. And so we just got together virtually with the leadership team and said, Let's brainstorm this out.

How were some students still able to volunteer without being in the clinic?

01:09

It actually became kind of cool, because we were able to use medical students who weren't physically present in Lubbock. So we had people home with their families in Dallas, or they were on the Amarillo campus or the Permian Basin campus, all being able to zoom in and talk to patients through the telemedicine and help people.

How did you help patients without internet access?

01:32

I knew from my own experience at the at the department that a lot of people don't have smartphones, or they don't have computers or friends or family that have smartphones, or computers, or even if they do, they are located in somewhere that doesn't have Wi Fi that doesn't have 5g or LTE or whatever. And so they would be in like, kind of like a smartphone, computer desert. So we thought, well, we have to come up with something because a lot of these people are even less fortunate than our regular patient base at the Health Sciences Center, we got to come up with a plan. So what we did is, Dr. Cindy jumper from the Health Sciences Center gave us the money to purchase tablets that we could have taken to people's cars, and they could do their their visit from their car. And we made sure that there was a hotspot in the parking lot there where there would be enough Wi Fi bandwidth where they could do that. And so that's how we kind of got started with it. And it went from, you know, the first couple weeks, we must have done like three to four patients only, it was so cumbersome to try to figure out what we were doing. And as time went on, we just got better and better at it till we got to where we are now or we can do 16. And we also do plain old phone calls for people who really have no ability to get here in person to even be in the parking lot. They don't have computers or smartphones.

How eager were students to continue running the free clinic during a pandemic?

03:03

Well, you know, most of the kids when they go into medical school it's because they want to help people. And they saw the pandemic as just more help than needed to be given. So you know, we've had to like tell the students, we can only have so many people here social distancing. Because if they were allowed to, they would have stampeded in. And the nice thing, of course, is we can use people

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that aren't on the premises that are somewhere else because of the zoom. So they have been very gung ho to participate and are chomping at the bit to be able to see patients in the clinic in person, which we're hoping to do by the summertime if our Lubbock numbers stay good.

Has the response from patients been positive?

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There's been some disappointments that we haven't been able to do the level of procedures that we've done in the past, basically, just not being able to, let's say there's a procedure that we would do or normally there'll be three or four people involved in, we just don't have the size that we would need to have that many people. And so we really need to have things more open up, to be able to do some of those procedures and to serve people in that way.