The Development of the Texas Teleforensic Remote Assistance Center (Tex-TRAC): A Trauma-Informed Model
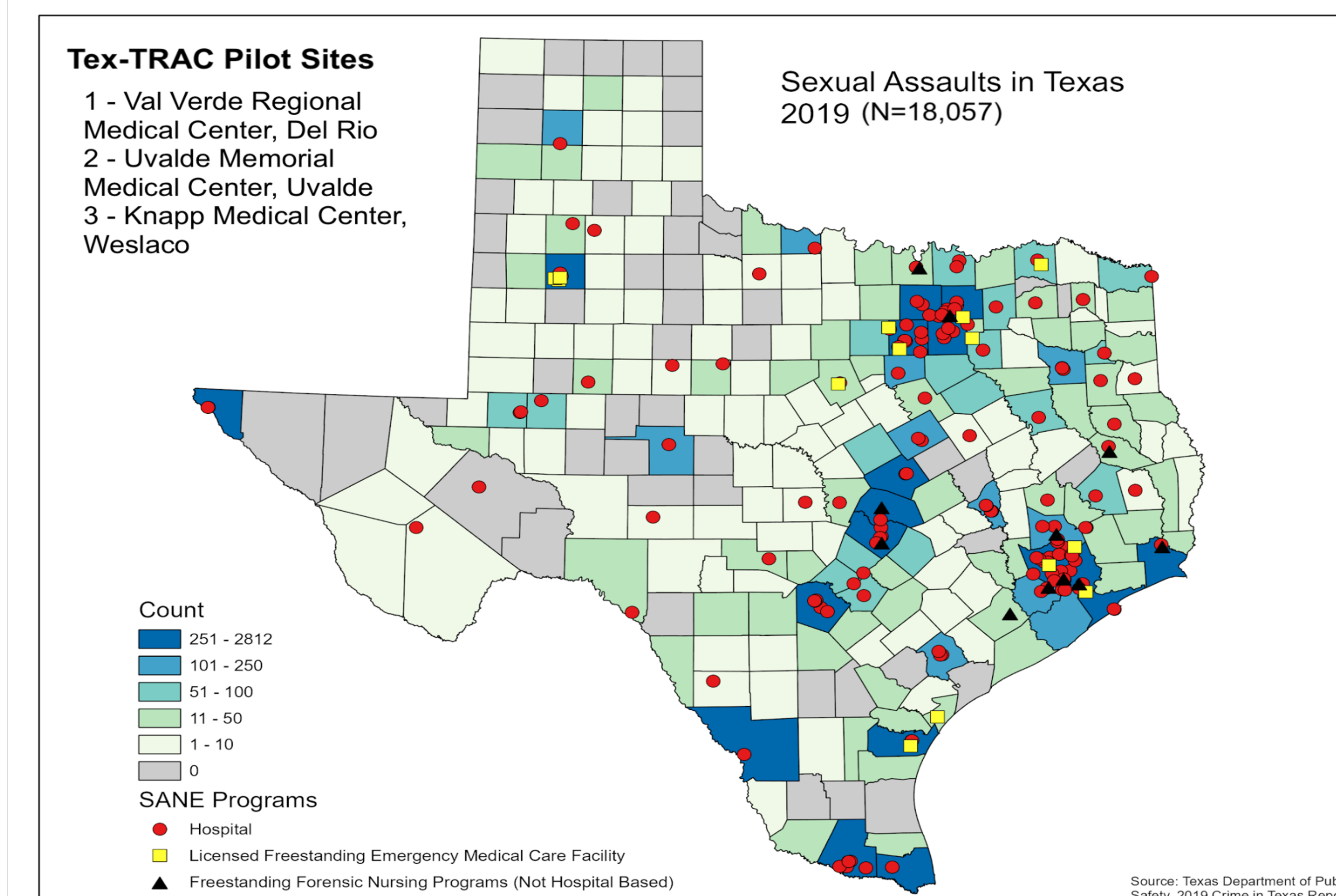
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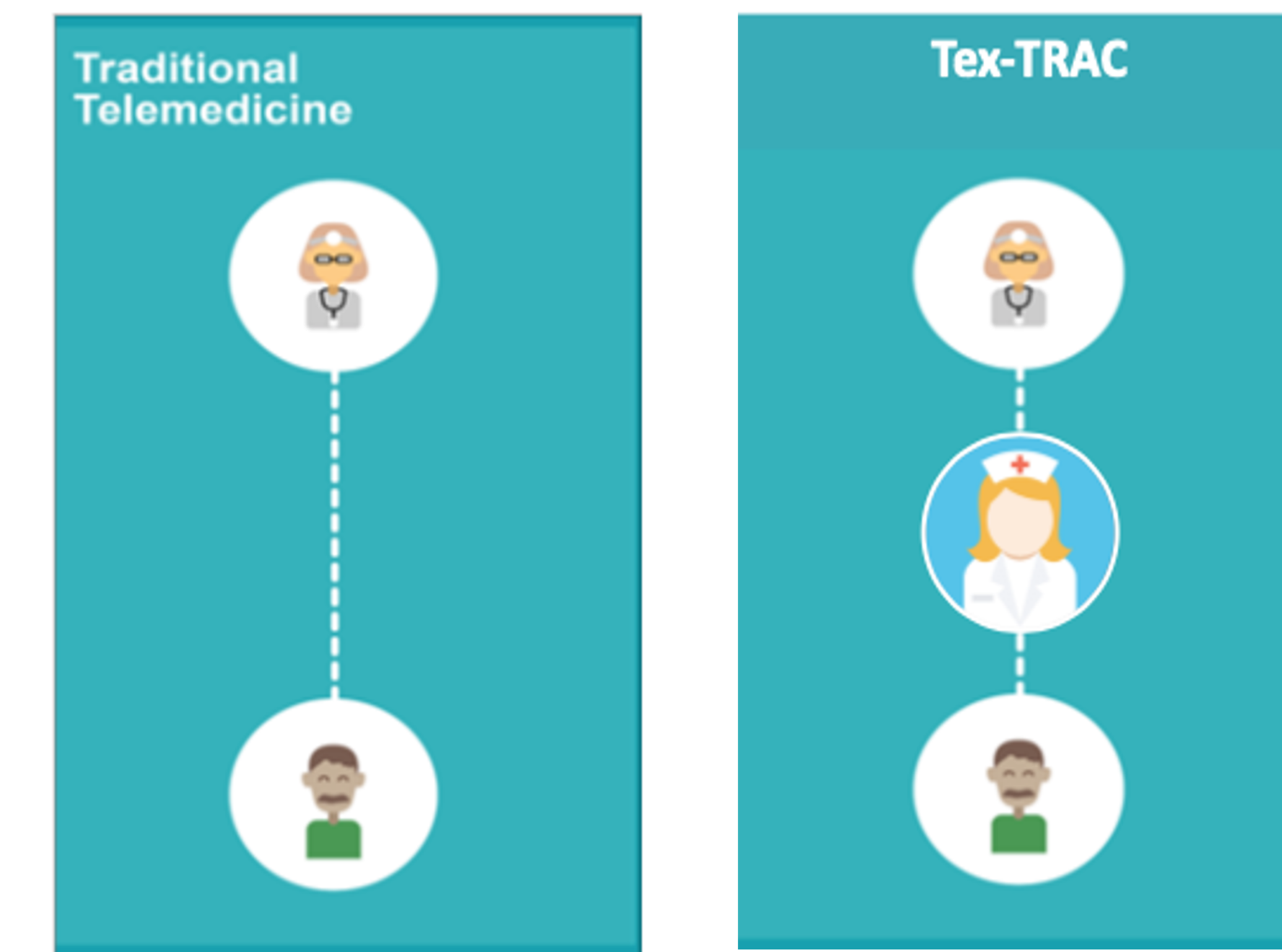**TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY**
College of Nursing

Background

- The Texas Department of Public Safety documented 18,057 sexual assaults in 2019.
- SANEs are registered nurses with 40+ hours of didactic education and 40+ hours of clinical education to conduct medical forensic exams.
- Transferring patients that do not have a SANE facility poses several challenges, such as (1) the patient might not present to the referred facility, (2) added travel time poses additional safety and health risks, (3) patients may have additional emergency room charges; (4) time-sensitive prophylactic medications may be delayed, and (5) evidence may be lost or contaminated.
- Senate Bill 71 was passed on June 4, 2019 to establish a statewide SANE Telehealth Center.
- Tex-TRAC will provide 24/7 telehealth expert SANE consultation and a tele-mentoring program to rural providers to increase access to high-quality, patient-centered, trauma-informed medical forensic exams.
- Limited data are available concerning telehealth guidance for sexual assault exams.

Tex-TRAC Pilot Sites
1 - Val Verde Regional Medical Center, Del Rio
2 - Uvalde Memorial Medical Center, Uvalde
3 - Knapp Medical Center, Weslaco

Sexual Assaults in Texas 2019 (N=18,057)

Count
- 251 - 2812
- 101 - 250
- 51 - 100
- 11 - 50
- 1 - 10
- 0

SANE Programs
- Hospital
- Licensed Freestanding Emergency Medical Care Facility
- Freestanding Forensic Nursing Programs (Not Hospital Based)

Source: Texas Department of Public Safety, 2019 Crime in Texas Report.

Methods

- Expert forensic nurses will provide 24-hour guidance to healthcare providers in rural and underserved areas of Texas to conduct patient-centered, trauma-informed medical forensic exams.
- Most existing SANE programs are clustered in large urban areas, leaving out rural and underserved communities.
- Program went live February 12, 2021.
  - Current partner sites: Uvalde Memorial Hospital, Knapp Medical Center, Val Verde Regional Medical Center.

Traditional Telemedicine | Tex-TRAC

- Tex-TRAC will provide services through:
  - Development of easy-to-use state-of-the art telehealth equipment especially for medical forensic exams.
  - Training of SANE hub and spoke nurses.
  - Ongoing online education and support of remote healthcare providers and a coordinated community response to sexual assault using Project Echo platform – Echo-SAFE.

Results

- Development of a unique patent-pending telehealth cart.
- Creation of policies and procedures.
- 18 trained hub nurses and 44 trained spoke nurses at 2 sites to date.
- Evaluation plans include:
  - Pre- and post-encounter surveys for patients, hub clinicians, spoke nurses, and survivor advocates.
  - 1 month post-interview with survivors.
  - Quality assurance evaluation of online encounter documentation.

Discussion

- Tex-TRAC offers a flexible approach using innovative telehealth strategies tailored to each site to support capacity to conduct high-quality, patient-centered, trauma-informed medical forensic exams.

Future Analyses

- Treating patients at the presenting site is optimal, but only if care is adequate. Nurses in rural areas that complete SANE education can still experience difficulty in maintaining competency with limited number of exams.
- Ongoing research and support will be needed to analyze the strength of the relationship to provide high quality patient-centered, trauma-informed care even when their health care program will see limited number of patients.

Acknowledgements