The Development of the Texas Teleforensic Remote Assistance Center (Tex-TRAC): A Trauma-Informed Model

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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-centered, trauma providers to increase access to high-quality, patient-centered, trauma-informed medical forensic exams.
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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.
  - Tex-TRAC team are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Texas Attorney General’s Office in response to Senate Bill 71, establishing a statewide telehealth center for sexual assault medical forensic examinations. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed by the Tex-TRAC team are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Texas OAG.
  - Future Analyses
    - 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.

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

- Treating patients at the presenting site is optimal, but only if care is adequate. Nurses in rural areas that complete SANE education can still provide high quality patient-informed care even when their health care program will see limited number of patients.