



## EMMC's Technological Innovation Provides Opportunity for Research

By Michael Rocque, EMMC Clinical Research Center

EMMC has been recognized for its technological progress in recent years. This innovation has created the opportunity for hospital personnel to take part in cutting edge research that is national in both scope and significance. Sometimes this research can be incorporated into day-to-day job duties, making it more manageable.

Thanks in part to EMMC's willingness to be in the forefront of technological progress, last year the hospital along with 8 other area hospitals won a \$750,000 Health Resources and Services Administration grant. This award allows an expansion and evaluation of the Telehealth program that began nearly 11 years ago. The study is led by **Dr. Erik Steele**, the Chief Medical Officer and Vice-President of EMHS. "The idea of the Telehealth programs is to take specialty expertise and deliver it to patients in rural Maine", says Dr. Steele. Telehealth communication involves a video conference between care providers in EMMC and remote locations, allowing a "real time" consultation in which specialists can give direction and assist in patient care. The project is being conducted in four areas: Trauma, Pediatric Intensive Care, Diabetes, and Psychiatry. EMMC's Clinical Research Center (CRC) is assisting with the project evaluation.

Dr. Steele and the research team, which includes Project Manager **Wanda Pacifici**, hope to show that Telehealth improves patient outcomes and reduces unnecessary transfers to EMMC. According to Dr. Steele, "you might have some cases in which the physician would have sent the patient to Bangor, but with some guidance and reassurance, they do not have to transfer the patient. And if they do not transfer, the process should optimize care at the local hospital. That's what we hope to show with this research".

The study has been rewarding, says Pacifici, who has been involved with Telehealth since its inception at EMMC. "I enjoy working on it; it's been rewarding. I feel the study is beneficial to the patients because it has allowed us to expand our services to other hospitals that might not otherwise have access to them". This research has offered an opportunity for Pacifici, a long-time Telehealth advocate, to have her vision become reality. "It's always fun to watch a thread of an idea actually be put into place, hopefully making a positive difference", says Dr. Steele.

That translation of ideas into practice is part of what clinical research brings to hospital settings. The CRC is hopeful that such large-scale research projects will become commonplace at EMMC, contributing to evidence-based practice.