



How Telepsychiatry Improved Patient Care at Broadlawns Medical Center

"PMC has helped us meet our mission of providing high-quality behavioral healthcare. Their team has really worked well with our staff in the Emergency Department and Inpatient Behavioral Health unit."

Dr. Tammy Chance, Chief Medical Officer
Broadlawns Medical Center

Case Study: Broadlawns + PMC

Broadlawns Medical Center delivers high-quality, compassionate, and cost-effective healthcare in Des Moines, IA. The health system's services include acute care, emergency care, specialty clinics, dentistry, and behavioral healthcare. Like many healthcare organizations across the country, Broadlawns faced challenges in psychiatric staffing. With a comprehensive behavioral health program—including an outpatient clinic, behavioral health urgent care, and a 44-bed inpatient unit—the demand for psychiatric care is immense.

To bridge this gap, Broadlawns turned to PMC Telehealth (formerly Integrated Telehealth Partners). Initially, PMC supplemented psychiatry consults in the emergency department (ED) and urgent care settings. The success of this partnership led Broadlawns to expand PMC's role into inpatient behavioral health, a decision that has significantly improved patient care, staff efficiency, and hospital operations.

Challenges

Psychiatrist Shortage – Broadlawns had been unable to fill key inpatient psychiatry positions for over a year.

Placement Delays – Behavioral health patients often waited 24 to 48 hours in the ED for placement into a treatment facility.

High Patient Volume – The behavioral health unit needed additional provider support to maintain high-quality care.

Staff Hesitancy – Some team members were initially skeptical about how telepsychiatry would integrate into inpatient care.

The ITP Solution

After witnessing PMC's efficiency in handling ED and urgent care consults, Dr. Tammy Chance, chief medical officer at Broadlawns, reached out to PMC to explore its potential for inpatient psychiatry support. The transition began with Dr. Joan James, a psychiatrist who quickly earned the trust of both staff and patients through exceptional communication and compassionate care via telehealth.

Following this success, Molly Saucer, a psychiatric nurse practitioner, joined the team, further solidifying PMC's role in inpatient behavioral health. Broadlawns now relies on PMC for up to 15 inpatient psychiatric consults per day.

Results & Impact

- ✓ **Faster ED Placement** – PMC reduced the average placement time for psychiatric patients from 24-48 hours to just 4-6 hours. This not only benefits patients by getting them appropriate care sooner but also improves overall ED efficiency.
- ✓ **Reduced Inpatient Length of Stay** – Early indicators show that PMC's involvement has decreased length of stay by approximately a day, without increasing readmissions.
- ✓ **Seamless Integration** – PMC's use of iPads makes provider-patient interactions smooth, and staff assist with on-site support and documentation.
- ✓ **Enhanced Provider Satisfaction** – The additional coverage has allowed Broadlawns' in-house psychiatric team to take needed time off without overburdening remaining staff.
- ✓ **Improved Staff Confidence** – Initial hesitancy from staff quickly turned into full support after seeing the PMC provider's impact in the first week. Today, Broadlawns staff are strong proponents of telepsychiatry.

Sustained Partnership & Future Outlook

Broadlawns originally sought PMC as a short-term or "band-aid" solution, but due to its ability to improve patient outcomes and reduce staff stress, the hospital views telepsychiatry as an important ongoing strategy. Even as Broadlawns works to hire more full-time psychiatrists, PMC remains a critical partner for ED consults, behavioral health urgent care, and inpatient psychiatric services.

"I feel the biggest impact PMC has had is with PTO coverage," said Dr. Geetanjali Sahu, interim associate behavioral health chief of medicine at Broadlawns Medical Center. "With ITP's help, our providers are able to take their vacations without feeling guilty about burdening other teams or impacting patient care. Another area that I think PMC helped was to improve our length of stay and flow of ER patients."



How Telepsychiatry Improved Patient Care (continued)

Advice for Other Hospitals Considering PMC

Dr. Chance encourages other hospitals to "give it a try", emphasizing PMC's flexibility, responsiveness, and high-quality care.

"We didn't have to commit to a certain amount of money or time. PMC worked with us, and once we saw how great they were, we wanted them more often. It's absolutely worth trying."

Conclusion

Broadlawns Medical Center's partnership with Psychiatric Medical Care demonstrates the power of telepsychiatry in addressing behavioral health provider shortages. Through faster patient placement, reduced inpatient length of stay, and seamless integration into hospital operations, PMC has proven to be an essential partner in delivering timely, high-quality psychiatric care.

For hospitals struggling with psychiatric provider shortages, Broadlawns' success story highlights how telepsychiatry can be not just a temporary fix, but a transformational solution.

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