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Practicum Site:

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An integrated telemedicine program for cleft lip and palate patients in Kijabe, Kenya

Introduction: Kijabe Hospital in Kijabe, Kenya is a government hospital that takes care of patients from all regions of the country. The hospital system has world class cleft and craniofacial surgeons, though children with cleft lip/palate often struggle with weight gain and nutrition. This issue is compounded by the patients often need to travel exorbitant distances for their consultations and follow-ups, which places burden on the families from a financial and logistical standpoint. The objective of this practicum project is to create a telehealth program to monitor these patient's nutrition and weight gain while easing the financial and travel burden on the families and improving their overall care.

Methods: The Kijabe surgeons and community health liaisons were consulted to create a telehealth program that was culturally, socially, and medically applicable. Each new cleft lip/palate family will now be given an informational card with their diagnosis and treatment plan. Instead of following up to the Kijabe cleft clinic, they will follow up at their local dispensary medical clinic and present their care to the nurse or staff physician to call the Kijabe cleft clinic with updated weights and overall nutritional status.

Results: As of now, the card has been designed with respect to Kenyan cultural and language. Starting October 2020, the card will be handed out to patients. Data will be tracked according to their weight gain, frequency of visits to the dispensary, and malnutrition status.

Conclusion: The start of this project was delayed by COVID-19 pandemic, so limited data and results has been gathered. The Kijabe Hospital clinics are now back and running at pre-pandemic capacity, so data will be gathered over the Spring 2021. Overall this project has the potential to utilize local resources to ease burdens on patient families and improve the efficiency of their care.