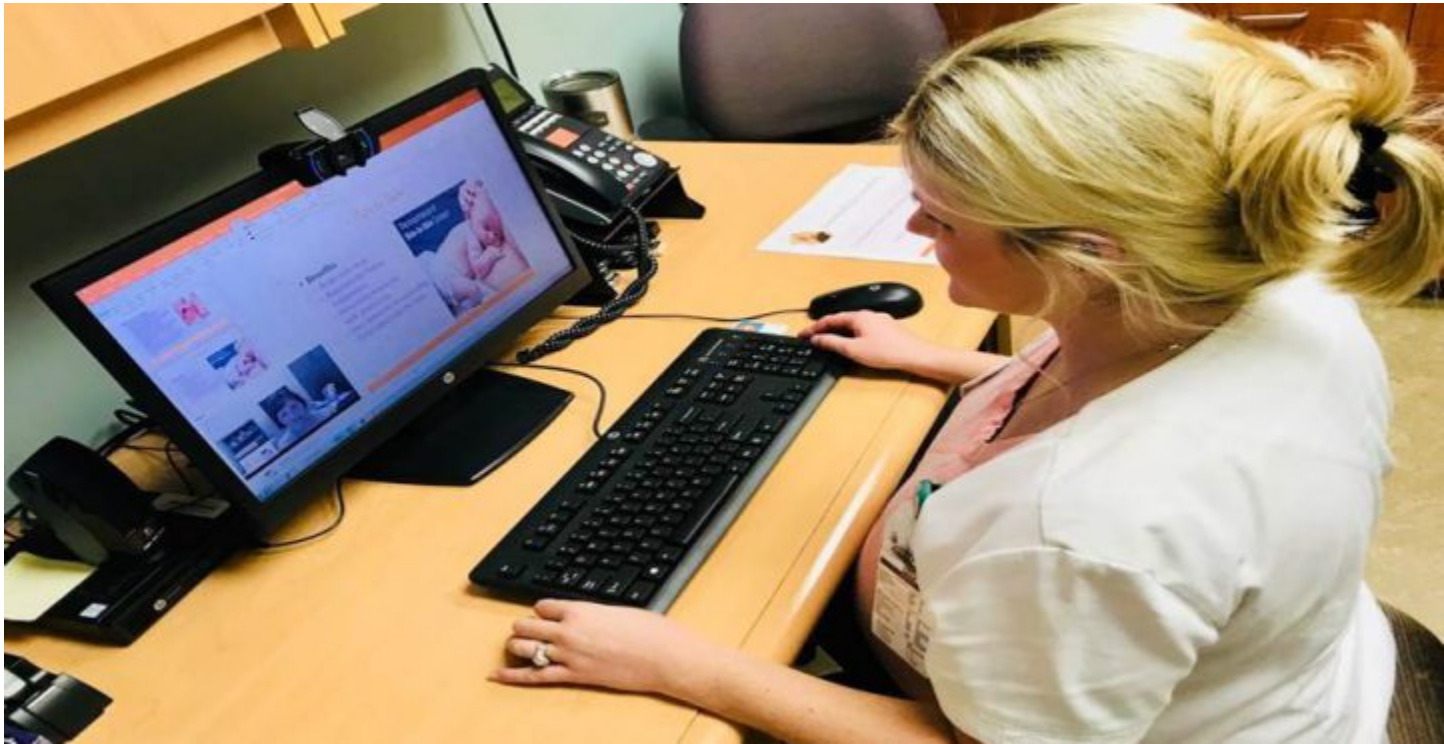


Memphis VAMC Uses Telehealth to Support Breastfeeding Mothers

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Photo: Cody Giovannetti, VA Registered Dietician and Certified Lactation Specialist at the Memphis VAMC, uses Telehealth technologies, such as Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) and VA Video Connect, so breastfeeding Veterans can receive services, education and support within the comfort of their own home.

Being a new mother comes with challenges, but Cody Giovannetti did not want breastfeeding to be one of them for women Veterans. Giovannetti, a VA Registered Dietician and Certified Lactation Specialist working at the Memphis VA Medical Center (VAMC), recognized that her facility did not have a program established for women Veterans to receive education on breastfeeding.

To address this gap, Giovannetti successfully launched a Lactation Clinic at the Memphis VAMC last year. She soon noticed that it was taxing on her patients to visit the hospital with their baby soon after delivery. As a result, Giovannetti began using VA telehealth solutions such as Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) and VA Video Connect.

CVT uses videoconferencing to link the Memphis VAMC with Veterans located at one of Memphis's nine Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). Additionally, VA Video Connect uses video to link with Veterans located at home so that breastfeeding Veterans could access VA services, education and support from the comfort of their own home. VA Video Connect serves as an easy way for live real-time interactive VA care wherever the Veteran is most comfortable. It is another VA telehealth solution that augments in-person VA services.

"Knowing from experience the challenges I went through, and the support I needed as a mother is what drove me to help this population of Veterans," Giovannetti said. "I want to be their support system because it can be frustrating or lonesome if you do not have family that has breastfed and therefore have no reference point."

Giovannetti recently supported a female Veteran through Telehealth at the Jackson (Tennessee) CBOC. She began to meet with the Veteran prenatally, and continued to support her even when the patient transferred her lactation services from the Memphis VAMC, to VA's Tennessee Valley (Nashville and Murfreesboro) Healthcare System's CBOC in Cookeville. Giovannetti used VA Video Connect to provide care throughout the Veteran's pregnancy and in her lactation journey with great success.

Other VA facilities are beginning to implement similar lactation services, and Giovannetti's biggest hope is that every VAMC will be able to provide telehealth lactation support for their Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) rather than outsourcing this type of care.

Since starting the program, Giovannetti has completed about 40 encounters with women Veterans per quarter. Her goal is to reach all of the CBOCs within the VISN 9 MidSouth Healthcare Network.

For additional stories about Modernization, please visit VA's [Modernization blog](#). Interested to learn more about telehealth? Please check out VA's blog on the Secretary's [5 Priority Goals](#). Contact Joe Salvatore at Joe.Salvatore@va.gov, if you have any questions.

Note: *The author of this blog is VHA's Office of Connected Care.*