

ROCK COUNTY BROADBAND ACCESS COMMENTARY

BY

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Broadband access has been a life changer for the majority of us Sanford Luverne physicians.

There are 9 physicians in our group and 6 of us live outside the city limits. We recently hired a fulltime OB/GYN physician who starts work here this fall. She intends to live "in the country" as well. Thus nearly all of our Luverne physicians will be linked up to our county's new broadband service after September 1st.

I've lived outside the city limits since 1991. Until broadband was installed I never had reliable internet service. I first had dial-up, then transitioned through 3 different microwave-sourced providers in an attempt to get reliable service. None could meet my needs and I finally cancelled the contract with my last provider and had no internet service at my home for the 4 months preceding broadband installation. I was unable to do any clinic work from home.

For the last 11 years our patients' charts have been computerized. We no longer maintain any paper charts. Our new reliable broadband service means that I am able to access my patients' electronic medical records from my home at any time of day. This is especially important for dealing with patient or hospital calls after hours when I am "on call." As you know, medical care has become extremely complex. As a physician attempting to make important medical decisions in the middle of the night, access to complete patient records is irreplaceable.

Another great benefit for us physicians is that we are able to update the patient charts from our home. On average every Minnesota family physician spends 2-2 ½ hrs after each clinic day simply updating patient charts. Allowing us to work from home gives us more flexibility in the quest for that elusive work/family balance.

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Dedicated to the work of
health and healing

As for completing daily charting, several of us physicians are not the best typists. (!) Instead we use voice recognition software to enter patient information. This program requires a high degree of connectivity to be functional and most of all accurate. Our new broadband handles this extremely well.

If the past is any prediction of the future, it is going to be more and more difficult to recruit new physicians to our rural community. Having an excellent broadband service is going to be a huge selling feature in promoting our county as the new "millennial" doctors come out of training.

I am very grateful for the work and efforts that our elected leaders have put into making this dream a reality. I believe that this project will pay for itself many times over.