ABSTRACT
The North Carolina Statewide Telepsychiatry Program (NC-SteP) provides telepsychiatry services in hospital emergency departments to individuals experiencing an acute behavioral health crisis. The program has significantly reduced the number of patients who present to emergency departments (EDs) without having access to psychiatric care. Vital outcomes for patients, including mental health and primary care providers, were assessed. Clinical provider hubs are positioned throughout the state, and they have been able to schedule patients for face-to-face interaction with the provider through real-time video-conferencing technology. Videoconferencing is facilitated using mobile carts and desktop units. The program has been successful in not only improving patient outcomes but also enhancing the capabilities of existing health care delivery systems.

RESULTS
• 57 hospitals in the network as of January 2015 including, 40 hospitals live and 17 hospitals are equipped, trained and scheduled to go live within 2 months.
• Clinical provider hubs operate in 17 hospitals.
• Over 6300 telepsychiatry assessments completed in 2014.
• In 2014, 3,309 had TVCs in place during an ED stay (about 50%). 666 of those were overturned (21%).
• Of the ED patients who received telepsychiatry services, 39% were discharged to home, 53% were discharged to another facility.
• 35% of patients served were uninsured.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
NC-SteP utilizes telepsychiatry, which provides the patient with a face-to-face interaction with the provider through real-time video-conferencing technology. Videoconferencing is facilitated using mobile carts and desktop units. The program has been successful in not only improving patient outcomes but also enhancing the capabilities of existing health care delivery systems.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
The plan for NC-SteP was developed in consultation with a workforce of key stakeholders including representatives from universities, NC DHHS, hospital/hospital systems, NC Hospital Association, NC Psychiatric Association, and LME/MCOs. In addition to the NC General Assembly appropriation of $4 million over two years to fund the program, NC-SteP is partially funded by the Duke Endowment in the amount of $3.5 million. NC DHHS provides administrative oversight of the funding.

REFERENCES

Sy Atezaz Saeed, MD, FAC Psych, Sheila F. Davies, PhD, Gregg Tecoza, Katherine Jones, PhD, and Brian P. Cooper, Jr., MHA
North Carolina Statewide Telepsychiatry Program (NC-SteP): Using Telepsychiatry to Improve Access to Evidence-Based Care
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INTRODUCTION
Mental disorders are common and they are associated with high levels of distress, morbidity, disability, and mortality. Many people with these disorders do not have access to psychiatric services due to the shortage and maldistribution of psychiatrists. This has resulted in patients going to hospital emergency departments (EDs) to seek services, resulting in long lengths of stay (LOS) and boarding of psychiatric patients in EDs.

NC-SteP was developed in response to NC Session Law 2013-362. The vision of NC-SteP is to assure that individuals who present to EDs in the state of North Carolina, experiencing an acute behavioral health crisis will receive timely, evidenced-based psychiatric treatment. East Carolina University’s Center for Telepsychiatry is the home for this program that is connecting 80 hospital EDs across North Carolina.

DISCUSSION
• NC-SteP has the capability and workable models to expand to the community-based settings, if funded.
• NC-SteP is positioned well to create collaborative linkages and develop innovative models of mental health care:
  o EDs and hospitals
  o Community-based mental health providers
  o Primary care providers
  o FQHCs and public health centers

NEXT STEPS
• 90 hospitals in network by end of summer 2015
• Implementation of a web-based portal linking hospitals and providers for sharing of information to schedule patients, exchange clinical data and support the administrative, and billing functions.
• Evidenced-based practices and treatment protocols to effect positive outcomes and recovery.

Satisfaction Survey: End of Year-1 Results

Telesyechiatry consult has improved patient care in our ED
Patients are generally cooperative during the telepsychiatry consult
Patients appear comfortable using the system to talk with the doctor

North Carolina Statewide Telepsychiatry Program (NC-SteP)