

# Wasn't Our Choice Filling the Gap on the North Shore

North Shore Health, Grand Marais, Minnesota  
Troy Batchelor



## North Shore Health Overview

We are a rural Critical Access Hospital located on the beautiful north shore of Lake Superior. The facility, which is the only hospital in Cook County, includes a 16-bed hospital, 4-bed emergency department, 37-bed skilled nursing facility, home health agency, EMS and a variety of diagnostic and therapeutic services. The next closest hospital is 2 hours south. The hospital provides services to the 5,600 full time county residents and 1 million visitors annually. We were privileged to be voted Top 20 Critical Access Hospital in patient satisfaction 2023.

## The Predicament

Historically, local clinic doctors provided inpatient care. In January 2023 we were notified that they would no longer deliver care as of July 1st, leaving the hospital without providers. This left us with the choice of closing inpatient care or finding an innovative way of continuing this essential service. After research, it became clear that virtual doctors could fill our impending need. Horizon Virtual agreed to partner with us in this unique endeavor.

## Utilizing Telehealth Services at North Shore Health

From July 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024, there have been 47 hospital admissions that would have been transferred two hours away, out of our county. As well as serving as our hospitalist, Horizon Virtual physicians now serve as part of our active medical staff. This helps bring advanced standards to our remote hospital.

Horizon Virtual hospitalists personally attend patients through a custom robot designed to allow patients to talk to their doctors. Most of our virtual providers (hospitalists, behavioral health, and speech therapy) also have remote access to our EHR for documentation and placing orders. The use of Dragon helps these doctors provide care faster and easier.

There have been no measurable declines in HCAHPS surveys since starting virtual services.



## Contact Information

### Troy Batchelor DON

troy.batchelor@northshorehealthgm.org  
(218) 387-3795

### North Shore Health

515 W 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. Grand Marais, MN  
(218) 387-3040

## Other Offered Telehealth Services

- Avel- ED support 3/17
- Avel ESANE- ED support 6/23
- Behavioral Health- ED support- In conjunction with Adaptive Telehealth and Wilderness Health
- Speech Therapy 8/23
- In-House Physical Therapy- able to provide Telehealth to community 4/20

# Splash Session



## Future Objectives

Transferring less patients • Investigate the ability to keep higher acuity patients • Explore the possibility of virtual rounding • Consider other telehealth services • Public education on the use of Telehealth • **Survive another year**