

# Medical College of Georgia & Wellstar MCG Health Rural Virtual Care Network

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**October 25, 2023**



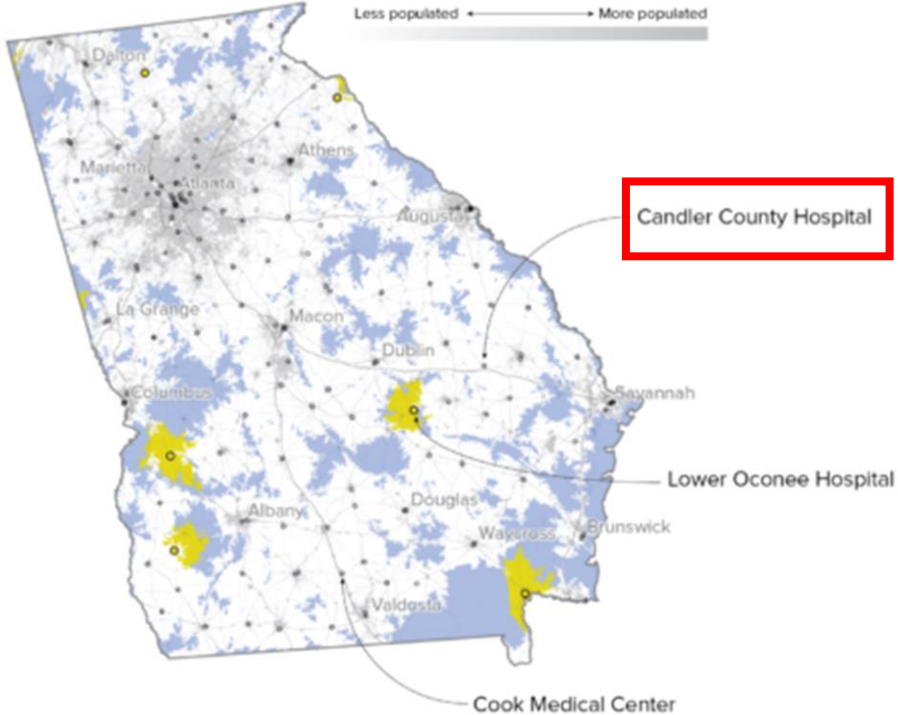
# Crisis: Access to Care



**892 Rural Hospitals  
at risk of closure  
Georgia: 26 (43%)**

## Rural Georgia's Dwindling Access To A Hospital

- Areas that are not within a 30-minute drive of a hospital
- Areas that are within a 30-minute drive of a closed rural hospital but not within a 30-minute drive of an open hospital
- Rural hospital closed between 2010 and September 2017
- Open hospital  
Includes critical access hospitals, acute care hospitals, and children's hospitals



Source: Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research at UNC, Center for International Earth Science Information Network, Mapzen isochrone service, Georgia Department of Community Health

Alicia Scheller/HuffPost



# Mission

## MCG Center for Telehealth

### Digital Inclusion

Leverage healthcare connectivity technology to address Georgia's healthcare disparities by **connecting** patients and providers to academic health care resources through MCG's state-wide educational campus and Georgia's academic health center through research, education, clinical service, community engagement, philanthropy, and advocacy.

Pillars for  
Success

Education

Research

Connectivity

Clinical  
Operations

# Telehealth is a *Strategy* to Reach All of Georgia

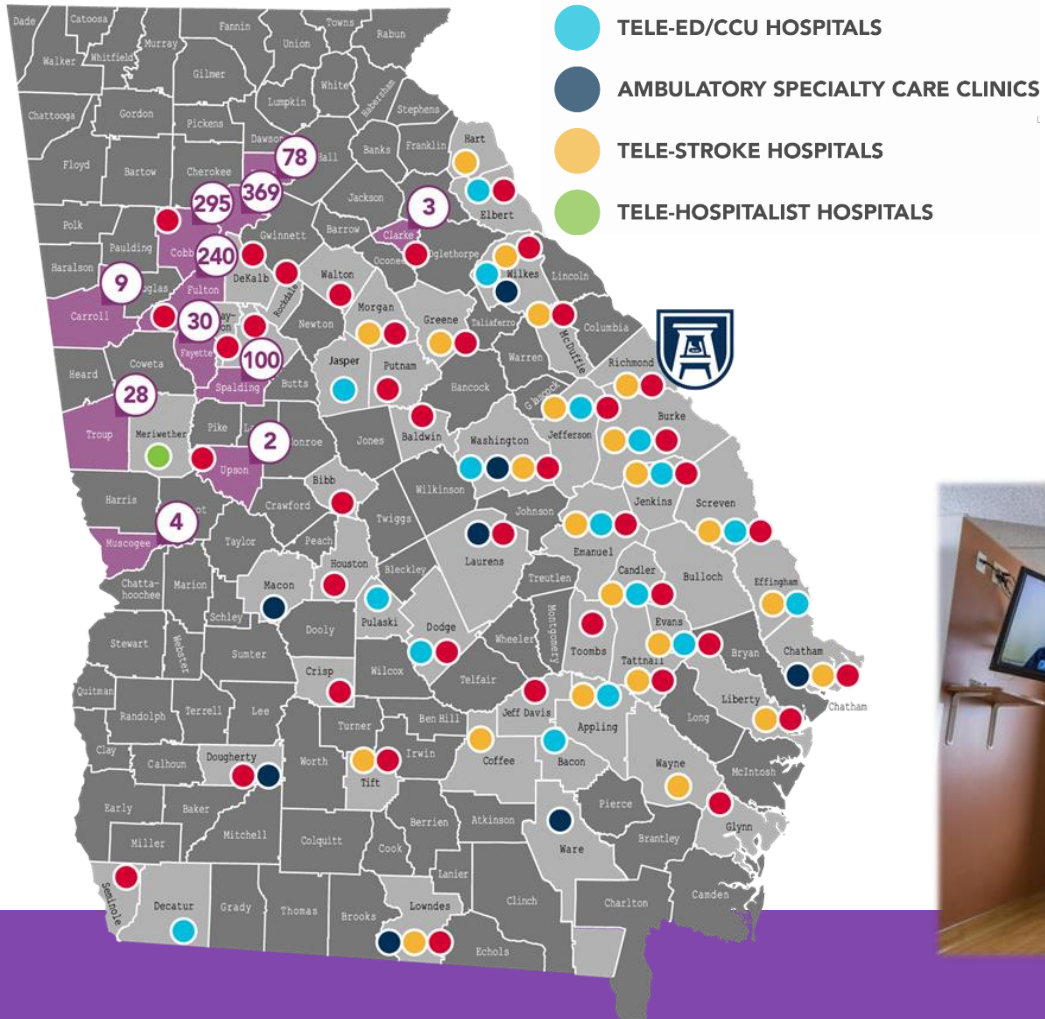
## Digital Inclusion

- **Equitable Access to Care**
- **Digital Leadership to transform Georgia's healthcare**
- **State-wide Brand Recognition**
- **Increased Market Share**
- **Complex Care Capture**
- **Reduction in Healthcare Costs**
- **Increased Quality of Care**
- **Campus-Wide Digital Connectivity for MCG**
- **Educational Leadership**
- **Telehealth & Digitally Connected Research**



# Wellstar MCG Virtual Care Network

Wellstar MCG Health has developed a “virtual” network of hospitals and clinical sites that are a launching pad to further strengthen statewide presence.



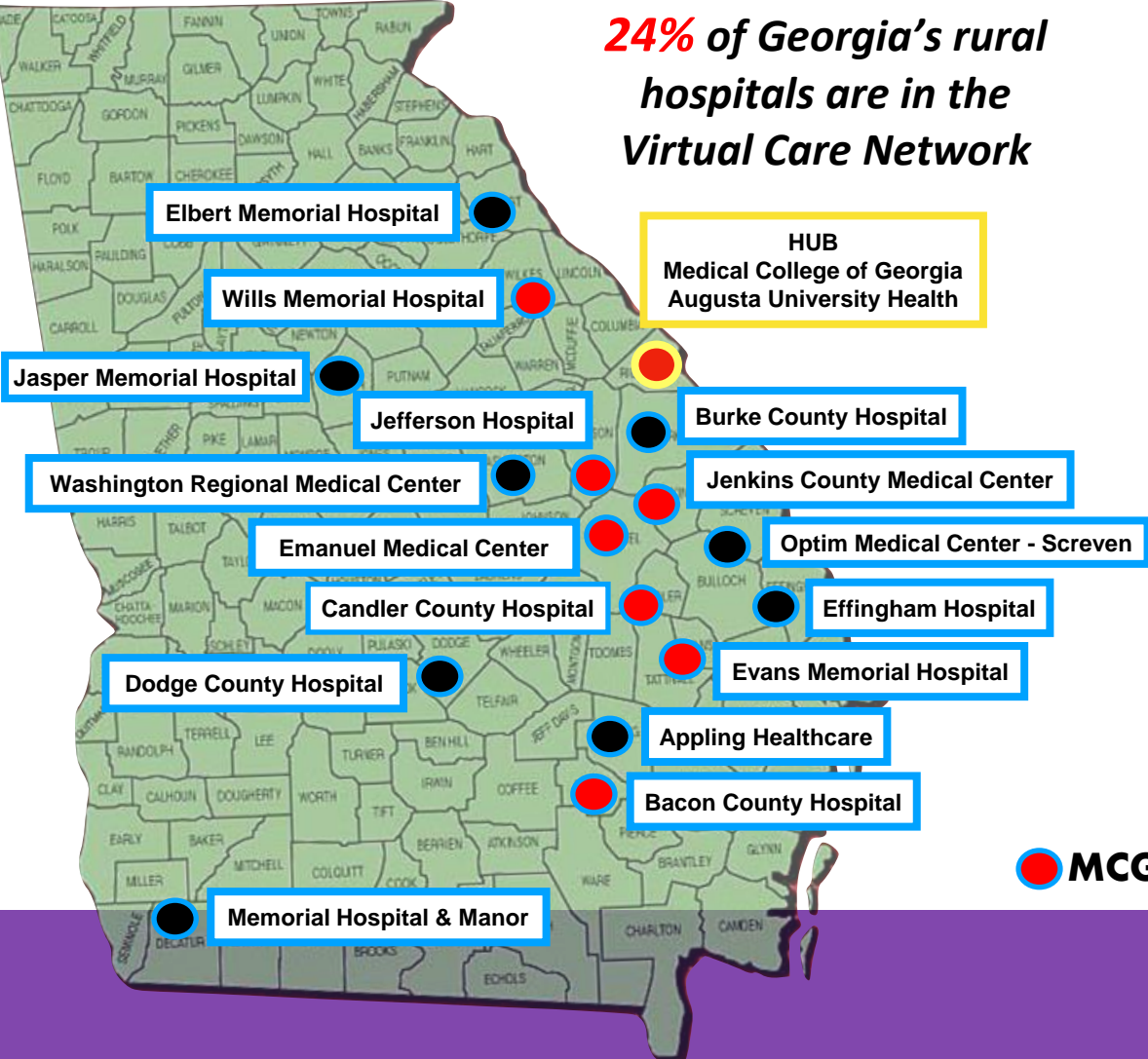
Telemedicine Technology *Connecting* Populations To Academic Medical Center & Extensive Healthcare Resources



# Rural Hospital Virtual Care Network

ED-ED    Tele-Critical Care    Tele-Hospital    Tele-Stroke

**24%** of Georgia's rural hospitals are in the Virtual Care Network

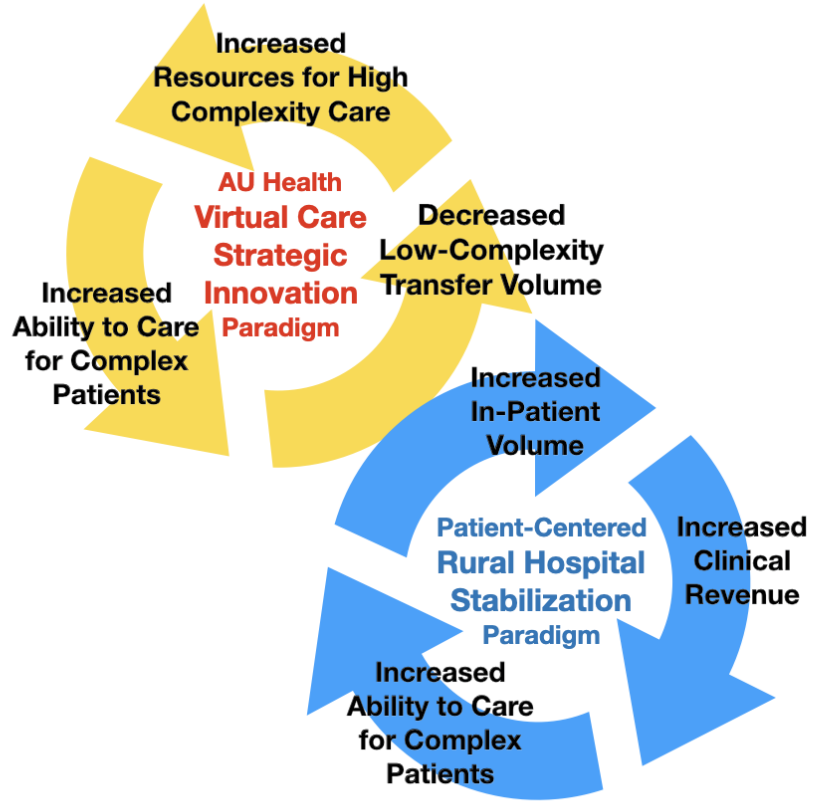


## Digital Inclusion

- Digital Leadership to transform Georgia's Healthcare
- Equitable Access to Care
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# Rural Hospital Virtual Care Network: A Shared Strategy



Tele-ER & Tele-Critical Care Stats				
	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY Totals
Total Patients	724	1186	976	2886
Total Encounters	3097	4203	2332	9632
Overall Transfer Rate	21.55%	27.40%	33.71%	28.07%
Transfer Rate to AUMC	90%	67%	77%	76%
End of Life Care	7.68%	10.06%	0.85%	6.61%

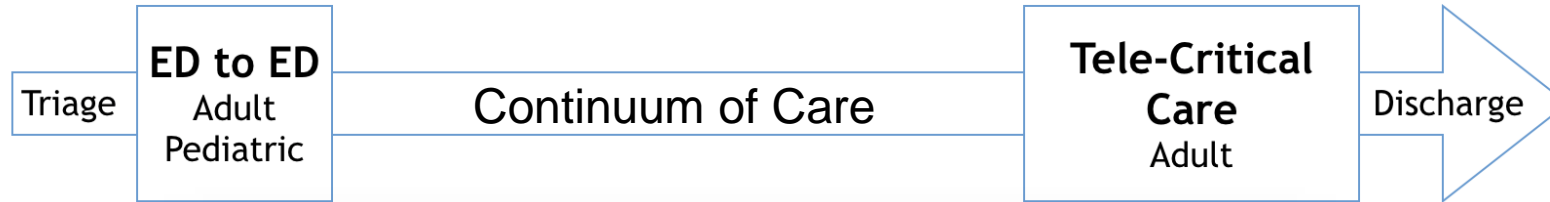
  

Tele-ER/CCU Transfer Trend by Calendar Year				
Year	PSA/SSA	Trend	OSA	Trend
2019	902		83	
2020	831	↓ -8%	97	↑ 17%
2021	1079	↑ 30%	211	↑ 118%
2022	815	↓ -24%	212	↑ 0%
2023	1668	↑ 105%	410	↑ 93%

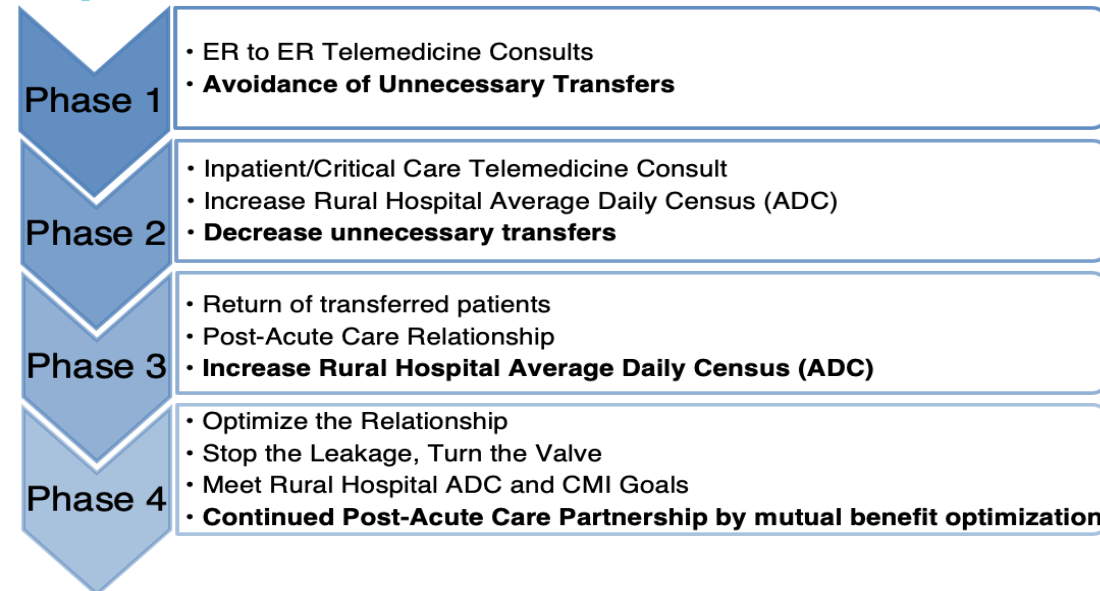
# Tele-ER/CCU Stats

Tele-ER/CCU Stats by Calendar Year (through October 10, 2023)

CY	Total Sites	Tele-ER Total Pts.	Total Tele-ER Transfers	Transfer Rate	Transfers to AUMC	AUMC Transfer % of Total	Transfers to Other Facility	Other Facility Transfer % of Total	Conversion to Inpatient	Tele-CCU Total Pts.	Tele-CCU Total Patient Days	Length of Stay (LOS)	Total Tele-CCU Transfers	Transfer Rate
2020	6	37	5	13.51%	5	100.00%	0	0.00%	16.22%	265	1409	5.32	55	20.75%
2021	14	194	44	22.68%	40	90.91%	4	9.09%	2.58%	901	4601	5.11	218	24.20%
2022	14	229	97	42.36%	71	73.20%	26	26.80%	27.07%	773	2553	3.30	206	26.65%
2023	16	192	82	42.71%	67	81.71%	15	18.29%	27.08%	580	1558	2.69	202	34.83%
<b>CY Total</b>		<b>652</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>34.97%</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>80.26%</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>19.74%</b>	<b>18.24%</b>	<b>2519</b>	<b>10121</b>	<b>4.02</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>27.03%</b>



## Implementation Process





# Wellstar MCG Health Rural Virtual Care Network: A Shared Strategy

## ➤ **Hospitals receive access to:**

- 24/7/365 access to Board Certified Adult & Pediatric EM Physicians
- 24/7/365 access to Board Certified Critical Care Physicians
- Specialist Support – “gatekeeper” model through Virtual Care Provider Team to reduce burden on hospitals for credentialing
- Care Coordination support including specialty care referrals for follow-up care & follow along for transfers

## ➤ **Improve critical skills and training opportunities:**

- Monthly Telemedicine and Critical Care Journal Club with CME
- Yearly Georgia Rural Emergency Medicine & Critical Care Practice Course
- Access to on-Site skills training

## ➤ **Support from the MCG Center for Telehealth:**

- Grants Collaboration
- MCG Learner Site for Residents and Students
- Research Collaborative

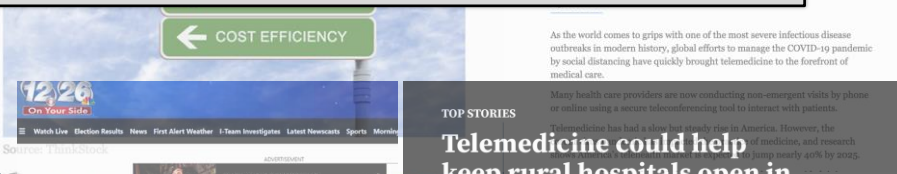
**“ This is a phenomenal program and is the future for rural hospitals in the state of Georgia.” –**

***Damien Scott, CEO, Emanuel Medical Center***

**“As one of Georgia’s 66 rural hospitals, we continue to work closely with other healthcare partners to ensure access to quality care is available and affordable for our community. Our partnership with AU Health and their telehealth platform has been extraordinary. The teamwork, collaboration, and dedication of the staff and physicians have ensured hundreds of patients in our region had immediate access to specialty care to ultimately improve their outcomes. I am excited about our expanded partnership with our Intensive Care Unit as patients in the region present with higher acuity illnesses, limiting the need for transport to receive state of the art care close to home.” *Bill Lee, CEO, Evans Memorial Hospital***

**“At Candler County Hospital, our hospital was able to recognize a 35% increase in net revenue through our collaboration with AUMC by utilization of the acute care telemedicine program. We decreased our transfers by 50%, were able to justify more acute inpatient days and we are on track for a positive operating margin in FY22. We appreciate the team approach that Dr. Lyon and Lauren have established through this very meaningful program.”**

***Michael Purvis, CEO, Candler County Hospital***




**How tele-critical care became a lifeline for a rural Georgia health system**

In 2019, Augusta (Ga.) University Health, an academic medical center, rolled out a grant-funded program to provide telemedicine emergency services at six rural hospitals in Georgia with two major goals in mind: to improve care in rural communities and keep their hospitals financially viable. By the summer of 2020, COVID-19 caused AU Health to shift this tele-ER program to provide critical care consults to patients with the virus or other chronic conditions who could not be transferred to higher levels of care.



# Telemedicine Education

- Monthly Education Seminar with CME credit
- Identified Educational Gaps
- Participant Selected Topics
- Interdisciplinary
  - MD/APP
  - Nurse
  - Respiratory Therapist
  - Clinical Pharmacist
- Rural Focused EM & Critical Care Practice Course



**Virtual Care**  
AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY HEALTH

## Telemedicine & Critical Care Journal Club

**VIRTUAL - FREE - INCLUDES CME**

Accreditation Statement: The Medical College of Georgia (MCG) is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) to provide continuing medical education for physicians. This activity has been approved for 1 hour CME.

Join us for a monthly educational series on relevant telemedicine and critical care topics

**May 26, 2023 @ Noon**  
12:00-1:00 – Emergency Airway Management  
For CME text monthly code to (833) 333-3333  
May Code: 7594  
Scan this code to join the meeting  
PASSCODE: 1828



Or visit  
[Telemedicine Journal Club](https://tinyurl.com/3ayacuxz)  
<https://tinyurl.com/3ayacuxz>



*Register Now!*

**RURAL EMERGENCY & CRITICAL CARE PRACTICE COURSE**  
**FEBRUARY 24-25, 2024**  
**SAVANNAH, GA**



<https://gcep.wildapricot.org/event-5386213>

# What's Next?

## ➤ Program Growth & Expansion:

### ➤ Tele-OB Services

- ER to ER
- Maternal Fetal Medicine (MFM)

### ➤ Tele-Psych

- ER to ER

### ➤ Tele-Stroke Hub & Hub Units

- Smaller rural hospitals become hub units from Wellstar MCG Health to receive transfers & admit lower acuity stroke & neurology cases

### ➤ Tele-Hospitalist

- Inpatient models to support physician recruitment & increased census needs

# Digital Inclusion

People Connecting To People  
Clinical Connectivity   Research   Education



## Wellstar MCG Augusta University, & MCG Center For Telehealth

- **Digital Leadership for Health Care Disparity**
- **Campus-Wide Digital Connectivity for MCG**
- **Educational Leadership**
- **Telehealth & Digitally Connected Equitable Research**

# MCG Center for Telehealth & Wellstar MCG Health Virtual Care

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**SCAN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT**

CENTER FOR  
TELEHEALTH

AU HEALTH  
VIRTUAL CARE

