Bone Health ECHO® Replication Guide

What is Bone Health ECHO?
Bone Health ECHO was developed through a collaboration of Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) at University of New Mexico (UNM) Health Sciences Center and the Osteoporosis Foundation of New Mexico. It is a strategy of telementoring healthcare professionals (e.g., physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants) in underserved communities to develop an advanced level of knowledge in the care of osteoporosis and metabolic bone diseases [1]. In the Bone Health ECHO demonstration project, launched on October 6, 2015, a faculty team based at UNM (the "hub") holds weekly 1-hour videoconferences with learners ("spokes") located throughout New Mexico and other states in the US. Teaching is primarily through case-based discussions and brief didactic presentations. By demonopolizing expertise in the care of skeletal diseases, Bone Health ECHO acts as a force multiplier that allows many patients to receive better osteoporosis care.

What is the evidence that ECHO improves outcomes?
In a proof-of-concept study published in New England Journal of Medicine in 2011 [2], the ECHO model of telementoring for the care of chronic hepatitis C was assessed. It was found that managed at 21 ECHO sites showed a sustained virologic response that was similar to patients treated at the UNM specialty clinic. The success of the hepatitis C clinic has been followed by replication of the ECHO model of telementoring in many states and countries for hepatitis C and other diseases. Outcomes of Bone Health ECHO are assessed through learner evaluations of each ECHO clinic session and periodic self-assessment questionnaires, with plans underway to evaluate clinical outcomes by analyzing healthcare claims databases.

How does Bone Health ECHO work with a fracture liaison service (FLS)?
Bone Health ECHO is complementary to secondary fracture prevention with FLS [3, 4] and can enhance its effectiveness by educating FLS coordinators and healthcare providers who care for patients who have fractured. ECHO participants also learn how to identify and manage high-risk patients before a fracture has occurred.

Why should I start a Bone Health ECHO hub?
This is an opportunity to make a difference in the care of osteoporosis by reducing the osteoporosis treatment gap in an enjoyable collaborative environment for faculty and learners.

What are the benefits?
Patients. For patients with osteoporosis and other skeletal diseases, advanced levels of care can be provided closer to closer to home with greater convenience and lower cost than referral to specialty center.
FLS. The effectiveness of FLS is enhanced through education of participating nurse coordinators and healthcare providers.

Providers. By participating in Bone Health ECHO, learners achieve expertise in the care of skeletal diseases, allowing them to provide higher levels for care for their own patients and the patients of other providers in the community, reducing the need for referrals to specialty centers. Professional satisfaction in improved and there is relief professional isolation that is common with healthcare providers in rural areas. No cost continuing medical education (CME) credits are offered.
Faculty. Teaching is conducted in a comfortable low-pressure collegial setting that reaches more learners on an ongoing basis than with traditional episodic medical conferences.
Healthcare delivery systems. By reducing the burden of osteoporotic fractures, Bone Health ECHO can improve the health and well-being of beneficiary patients and decrease fracture-related healthcare expenses.

What are the challenges?
Developing a Bone Health ECHO hub requires a commitment to excellence in teaching, providing funds for adequate staff support, and recruitment of learners. Fortunately, Project ECHO has replication tools, resources and technical assistance available to facilitate this process.

How do I get started?

- To register as a Bone Health ECHO learning partner or observer, go to http://www.ofnm.org. By viewing and participating in an ongoing clinic you can have first hand experience in how it is done.
- For more information on the logistics of starting your own Bone Health ECHO hub, contact Erika Harding, Project ECHO Director of Replication Initiatives, at eharding@salud.unm.edu or the replication team at echoreplication@salud.unm.edu.
- To questions about the experience of the Bone Health ECHO to date, contact E. Michael Lewiecki, MD, at mlewiecki@gmail.com.
- For background information on Project ECHO, visit http://echo.unm.edu/.
- To view a 12 minute TEDxABQ video presentation by Project ECHO founder, Dr. Sanjeev Arora, go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lY5nlJxac0g.
- To view a 1 hour video of a previous Bone Health ECHO clinic, go to https://youtu.be/VvgffBKt84A.
- For a New York Times article on Project ECHO from June 11, 2014, go to http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/06/11/the-doctor-will-stream-to-you-now/?_r=0

References

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2. Arora S, Thornton K, Murata G, et al. (2011) Outcomes of treatment for hepatitis C virus infection by primary care providers. N Engl J Med 364:2199-2207.
3. National Bone Health Alliance (2016) Fracture Prevention Central. www.nbha.org/fpc. Accessed March 28, 2016.
4. International Osteoporosis Foundation (2016) Capture the Fracture. www.capturethefracture.org. Accessed March 28, 2016.