

Telemedicine allows medical specialists to consult across the barriers of space and time. As a health care provider assists the patient, the consultant conducts an interview and performs an appropriate physical examination. The health care provider is either the patient's primary physician, a physician assistant, a nurse practitioner, or a specially trained nurse who works with the primary physician.

Electronic stethoscope, dermatology camera, otoscope/ophthalmoscope, ultrasound, and x-ray transmission are available to aid in the consul-

tative examination. The consultation may be videotaped for the primary physician to view at a later time or for the patient to take home. All videotapes, transmitted records, and written consultation reports are handled with the utmost security to preserve patient confidentiality.

The East Carolina University School of Medicine and its Center for Health Sciences Communications have been involved with distance learning for five years and telemedicine for over two years. In 1994, ECU completed construction of a telemedicine suite with four

interactive rooms – the first facility of this kind in the U.S. Telemedicine is an efficient means of medical consultation in rural America. The program reaches out to prisons, military bases, rural hospitals, and clinics. Network applications include: distance learning, telemedicine, database access, supercomputer applications, and access to the global village. Benefits to the region include: access to a statewide network, access to supercomputers, access to the university database, seminars and workshops, community meetings, and remote medical consultations.

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