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## NEWS RELEASE

# Penn State Health Partners with Mercy Virtual

*Mercy signs agreement, making it the second virtual medicine deal in recent months*

**ST. LOUIS (May 13, 2016)** – Penn State Health has signed a partnership agreement with Mercy Virtual that will benefit patients and medical staff of both systems.

Initially, Mercy will virtually monitor intensive care unit (ICU) patients at Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, a leading university health center. The partnership will expand over time across Penn State Health facilities and programs, drawing on both partners' expertise to create new care models across the region.

“Virtual care will positively impact our quality, cost and the patient experience across our health system and beyond because it will allow us to identify and meet patients' needs earlier,” said Dr. Craig Hillemeier, CEO of Penn State Health. “Having this ‘second set of eyes’ on our most ill and injured patients will identify and meet patients' needs faster, often presenting simpler and less intensive solutions. In the long term, this type of partnership can help address the nursing and physician specialist shortages across the country. Together, Penn State Health and Mercy will map out new ways to leverage virtual care to meet future challenges.”

This partnership further changes the health care landscape in the U.S., marking Mercy's second virtual medicine agreement in recent months. Mercy and [University of North Carolina](#) Health Care system teamed up earlier in the year. The ultimate goal of this latest partnership is to create a health care consortium in which Penn State Health will in the near future become a Mercy hub for providing virtual care services to other hospitals in the central Pennsylvania region.

“The health care world we know today is no longer the health care of the future. Virtual care overcomes the barriers that prevent us from delivering the best care to our patients,” said Dr. Randy Moore, president of Mercy Virtual. “Every system in the U.S. brings specific expertise – be it research, intensive care or training clinicians – and by coming together, we believe we can bring that expertise to more people - faster. For patients, it means they get the best care whether they are in a hospital or a clinic or at home, or even away on vacation. It brings care to them where and when they need it.”

Beyond increasing quality, access and efficiency for patients served by Penn State Health, Mercy and other Mercy Virtual partners, Penn State will leverage Mercy's decade of telemedicine experience to expand its own capabilities in this field.

[LionNet](#), Penn State Health's telemedicine program for stroke, added four community hospitals to its network in the past year for a total of 14 partner hospitals. LionNet brings the resources of Penn State's comprehensive stroke center to communities across central Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, Penn State dermatologists are now conducting consults via telemedicine, utilizing secure technology that allows providers to send data and images. And a recently launched telemedicine initiative allows physicians in the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center Emergency Department to connect with colleagues at Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute in Harrisburg on patient consults that require specialty support. The result for patients is enhanced access to timely, cost-effective specialty care closer to where they live. In addition, Mercy and others will benefit from Penn State

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Health's nationally renowned medical research, education, analytics experience and many areas of clinical expertise.

"By tapping into each other's experience, we speed up the benefits to patients," said Moore. "Mercy is building on more than a decade of innovations and learning so Penn State Health's virtual journey to where we are today will be much faster. Together, our shared experiences will increase innovation while reducing costs and risks."

In the past 10 years, Mercy has become a national leader in remote delivery of health care services, monitoring patients using high-speed data and video connections. Last fall, Mercy opened its Virtual Care Center, the only center of its kind, in St. Louis, Missouri. Dedicated entirely to care outside its own walls, it is the cornerstone of Mercy's virtual care program. The new building is the nerve center for Mercy's existing telemedicine programs, including:

- **TeleICU** – Launched in 2006, Mercy operates the largest single-hub electronic ICU in the nation. Doctors and nurses monitor patients by working virtually with bedside caregivers in 32 ICUs across seven states. In the past year, ICUs using Mercy's TeleICU have seen a 35 to 40 percent reduction in how long patients stay in the hospital and 30 to 40 percent fewer deaths when compared to national benchmarks.
- **TeleStroke** – Many emergency rooms across the country don't have an on-site neurologist so a 24/7 virtual neurologist can be lifesaving. Mercy's program provides board-certified stroke neurologists who work closely with the local emergency teams in assessing symptoms of a stroke via two-way video and determining if clot-busting drugs can be administered which can save lives and reduce disabilities caused by strokes.
- **Virtual Hospitalists** – A team of doctors is dedicated to seeing patients virtually within the hospital when the local doctor is not on-site or busy with other patients. They support the bedside team by evaluating patients, ordering tests or therapies and admitting patients when needed, which improves patient care, increases nurse satisfaction and alleviates physician burden.
- **Intensive Ambulatory** – By focusing on the one to five percent sickest patients, a multidisciplinary team, led by an internal medicine physician, extends a patient's medical team and brings care home. With advanced analytics, biometric monitoring and interactive technologies, the team proactively monitors chronically ill patients around the clock, able to respond within minutes, providing individualized care that keeps patients healthier and out of the hospital.
- **Care Management** – This program promotes health and wellness while simultaneously managing the health of patients living at home with chronic and complex medical conditions. Patients realize fewer unnecessary emergency visits and hospitalizations, as well as shorter hospital stays and better disease management – all of which lowers costs for employers and health systems.

"Virtual care will be critical to the future of health care," said Moore. "Health care providers must provide better quality and higher value to more people. By forming interdependent partnerships without walls, we will evolve health care to a new place. Our collaboration with Penn State Health will bring better care to patients everywhere."

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***Mercy Virtual*** delivers virtual care services to 600,000 patients across six states (Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and South Carolina), improving patient outcomes and access, while reducing total cost of care. Often called a “hospital without beds,” Mercy Virtual Care Center operates 24 hours a day and is staffed with more than 300 clinicians. [Mercy](#), named one of the top five large U.S. health systems in 2016 by [Truven](#), an IBM company, serves millions annually. Mercy includes 45 acute care and specialty (heart, children’s, orthopedic and rehab) hospitals, more than 700 physician practices and outpatient facilities, 40,000 co-workers and more than 2,000 Mercy Clinic physicians in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma. Mercy also has outreach ministries in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

Founded in 1963 through a gift from The Milton S. Hershey Foundation, [Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center](#) is a leading university health center located in Hershey, Pa. The 551-bed Milton S. Hershey Medical Center is a provider of high-level, patient-focused medical care. Annually the Medical Center admits 29,000 patients, accepts 1 million outpatient visits, receives 72,000 emergency room patients and performs 30,000 surgical procedures. As a Magnet designated hospital since 2007, Hershey Medical Center employs caregivers who are dedicated to excellence and achieving superior patient and community outcomes. The Hershey Medical Center campus includes [Penn State College of Medicine](#) (Penn State’s medical school), [Penn State Cancer Institute](#) and [Penn State Children’s Hospital](#)—the region’s only children’s hospital.