



NEWS RELEASE

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LOWNDES COUNTY HOSPITAL TO JOIN TELEMEDICINE PROGRAM

Atlanta – Insurance Commissioner John W. Oxendine announced today that a Lowndes County hospital has joined the Georgia Telemedicine program, part of his Rural Health Initiative.

Smith Northview Hospital in Valdosta is the latest health facility to join the four initial sites of Piedmont, Emory, Savannah Memorial and Medical College of Georgia, Oxendine said. Currently 89 facilities participate in the statewide program, which provides access to specialty healthcare for all Georgia residents through telemedicine.

“Telemedicine will provide our citizens with access to the highest quality and most advanced medical care available anywhere in Georgia,” Oxendine said. “There will be no need for our rural residents to travel across the state seeking the best possible healthcare.”

Telemedicine is a healthcare delivery method that applies high-speed telecommunications systems, computer technology and specialized medical cameras to allow doctors to examine, diagnose, treat and educate patients at a distance. Oxendine said Georgia’s telemedicine program will utilize more than 20 specialties including Behavioral Health, Cardiology, Dermatology, Endocrinology, Internal Medicine, Neurology, Pediatrics and Psychiatry.

The Rural Health Initiative was created when Oxendine renegotiated the merger of WellPoint Health Networks Inc. Approval of the merger included approximately \$126.5 million over 20 years to begin his Rural Health Initiative.

The Georgia Telemedicine program is becoming one of the most comprehensive and integrated statewide networks, with at least 89 rural presentation sites tightly linked with major teaching hospitals. It has become one of the largest equipped infrastructure in the U.S.