

Sanjeev Arora, MD, FACG, MACP is the Director and Founder of Project ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes). He is a Distinguished Professor of Medicine with tenure in the Department of Internal Medicine at University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center. Dr. Arora developed the ECHO model as a way to dramatically improve both capacity and access to specialty care for rural and underserved populations. This is accomplished by linking expert inter-disciplinary specialist teams with primary care clinicians through teleECHO clinics, where the experts mentor primary care clinicians to treat complex conditions via guidance, feedback and didactic education. This helps rural clinicians develop knowledge and self-efficacy so they can adopt research findings and deliver best practice care.

The first teleECHO clinic was developed in 2003 to respond to a growing health crisis hepatitis C and has since expanded to cover over 60 disease areas and complex issues at over 115 academic medical centers in 23 countries. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Defense have also adopted the ECHO model to enhance access to specialty care. In 2007, Project ECHO came in first among more than 300 entries from 27 countries in winning the Changemakers award. This international competition was sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and Ashoka Foundation to identify programs that are changing the paradigm of how medicine is practiced.

In 2011, ECHO published a prospective cohort study in the New England Journal of Medicine, to prove that treatment for HCV by primary care providers using the ECHO model is as safe and effective as treatment by specialists at an academic medical center.

Over the last 13 years Dr Arora has received more than 65 million dollars of grant support. Dr Arora has been awarded numerous prestigious awards including: the Teresa Heinz and the Heinz Family Foundation 19th Heinz Award for Public Policy, the Second Rosenthal Award from the Rosenthal Family Foundation, the Presidential Award of Distinction from the University of New Mexico and the American College of Physicians and the American Telemedicine Association (ATA) President's Award. Dr Arora was also recognized during World Hepatitis Day 2014, at the White House in Washington DC, as a leader in advancing efforts to address viral hepatitis and the goals of the Action Plan for the Prevention, Care, and Treatment of Viral Hepatitis.

In very recent developments, the ECHO Act, initiated by ECHO partners across the U.S., was passed unanimously through both houses of Congress and signed into law by President Obama on December 14, 2016. This legislation mandates and empowers two federal agencies (the General Accounting Office, or GAO, and the Health Resources and Services Administration, or HRSA) to study the impact of Project ECHO on the U.S. health system, and will serve to lay the pathway for sustainable funding of the model.