



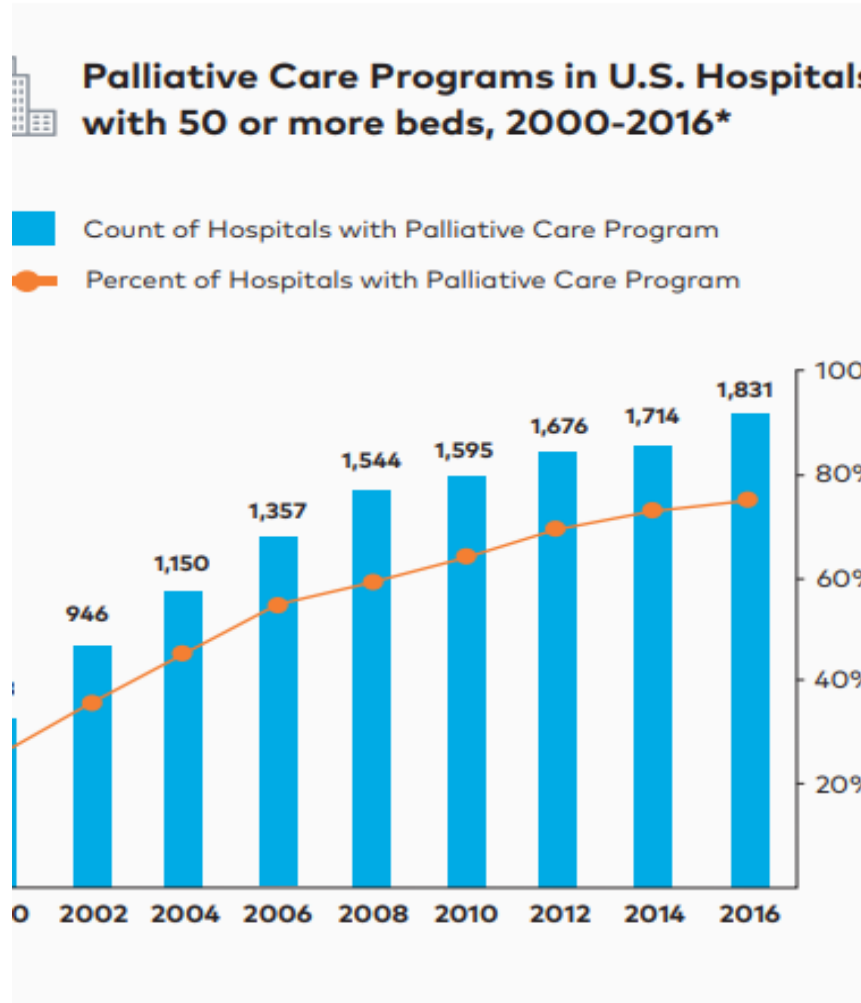
DECREASING RURAL INEQUITIES IN ACCESS TO PALLIATIVE CARE

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What I will cover...

- Why we started
- The WA model
- What to consider when starting a program in your state
- Lessons learned

Most rural hospitals in the west have 25 beds or less...



“Over the past 16 years, the percentage of hospitals (50 or more beds) with a palliative care program has tripled.”

“growth-of-palliative-care-in-us-hospitals-2018-snapshot-2000-2016%20(1).pdf”
Center for the Advancement of Palliative Care (CAPC) Accessed 10/22/2021

“Ninety percent of hospitals with palliative care are in urban areas. Only 17% of **rural hospitals with 50 or more beds** report palliative care programs.”

<https://reportcard.capc.org/>
Accessed 10/22/2021

The why: ROH**
** Return on Humanity

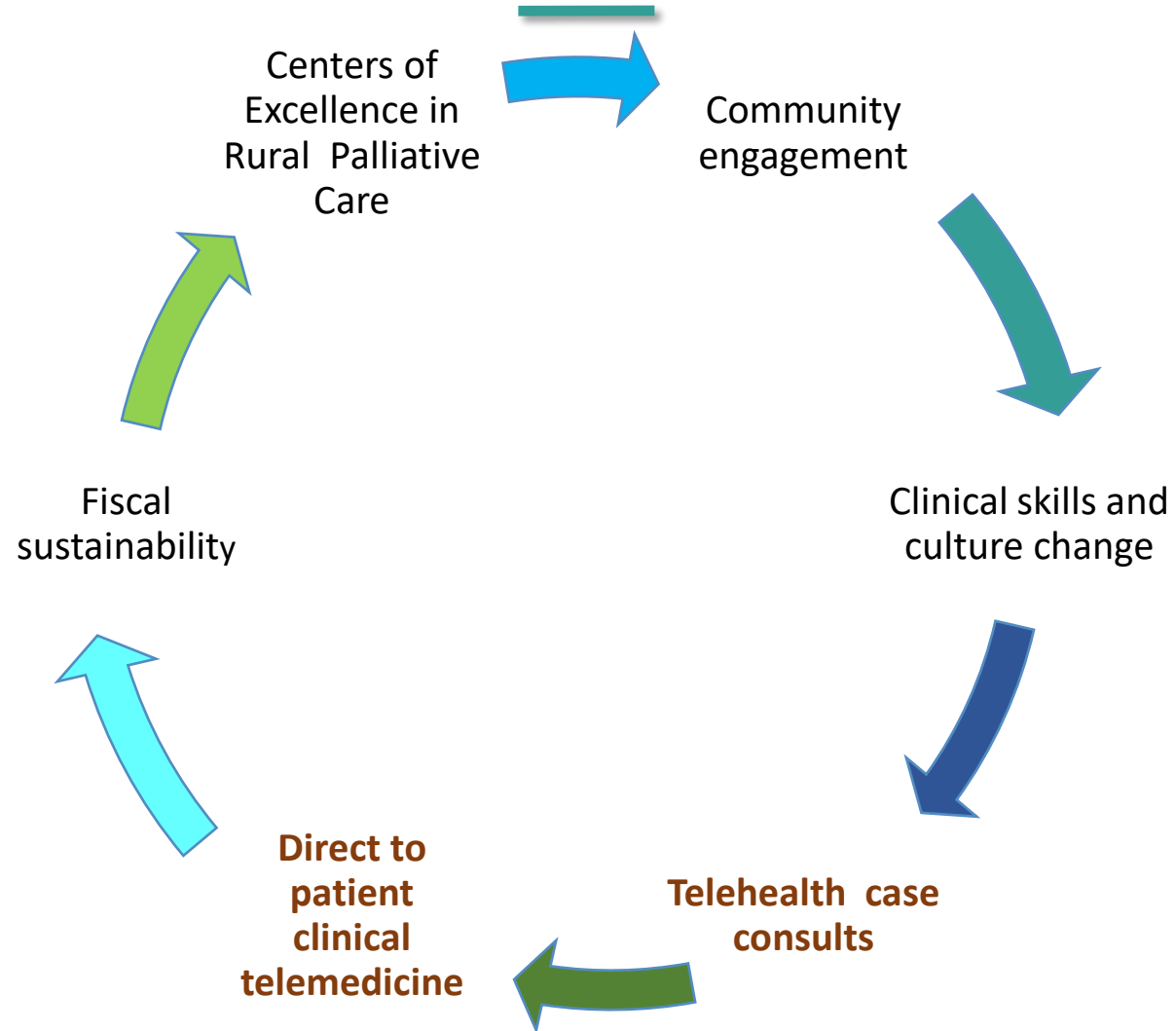
- Everyone wants people who are suffering to have relief
- Providers, clinical teams , patients and families may cling to curative treatments because it is what they know
- No one wants to say ,”There is nothing more we can do for you,” but sadly some patients still hear that.
- Palliative care is not in awareness for many and is often confused with end-of-life care or hospice, or thought to be giving up.
- Palliative care is about living well with illness.
- **Bottom Line: at a time of great stress, rural residents deserve to be with the people they love in the places they love.**

Washington Rural Palliative Care Initiative

Objectives

- Assist rural health systems and communities to integrate palliative care in multiple settings, to better serve patients with serious illness in rural communities.
- Decrease transfers to urban tertiary services.
- Move upstream to serve patients with serious illness earlier in their experience of illness.
- Develop funding models for sustainable services

Washington State Rural Palliative Care Initiative



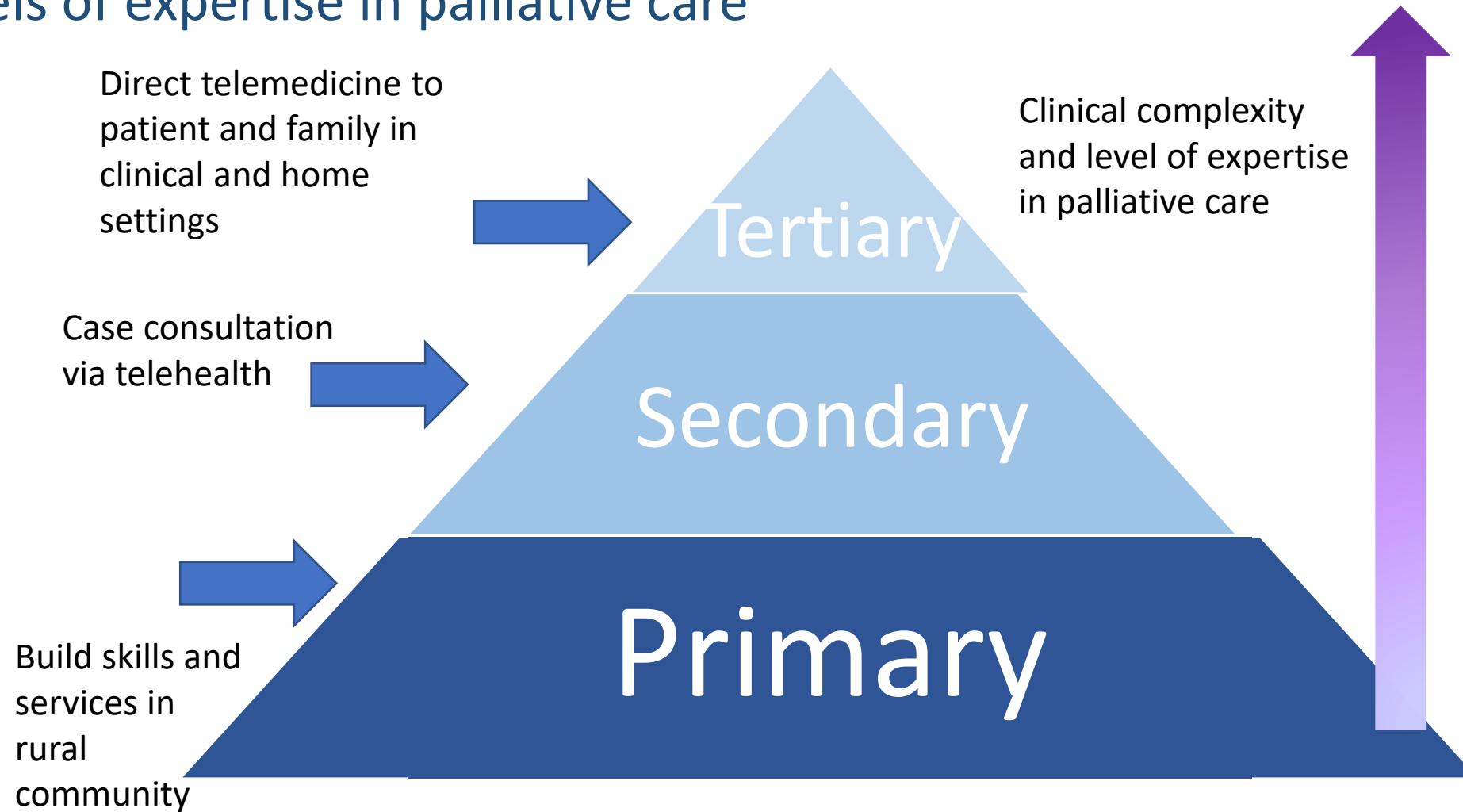
Funding

- **In-Kind** : start with what you have and figure it out from there, don't wait for funding to start shaping this work.
- Flex , SORH and even PCO
- Foundation grant funding from Stratis Health
- State Medicaid Managed Care Organization health plan
- Cambia Health Foundation

What does a rural palliative care program look like?

- Wide variation in structure and focus.
- Inter-disciplinary teams sometimes multi-organization.
- Dynamic issues of capacity to manage when workforce fluctuates.
- Windshield time for home visits can be significant, for example Okanogan County is frontier, and larger than Maryland, Rhode Island and Delaware combined.
- Moving forward, telehealth will be increasingly integral.

Levels of expertise in palliative care



Lessons learned

- Serious Illness communication skills training creates confidence.
- Close collaboration with the member organization(s) for hospice, and home health is critical.
- Highly likely that eligible patients will outstrip capacity-start small, very small.

Lessons learned (cont.)

- Early adopters might be the people who have too many top priorities for transformation.
- Disruption from leadership turnover can jeopardize or stall fledgling services.
- Telehealth case consults are of large value to our cohort teams
- Clinical telemedicine direct to patients is here to stay; but different than we envisioned.

Getting started in your state: rural palliative care

- Environmental scan-statewide
- Bring together an advisory team; palliative care experts, rural health leaders, telehealth experts, we also suggest medical schools, nursing programs
- Build a model to support developmental work for rural healthcare systems and communities
- Help local champions bring together a community team to do an asset and gap activity and develop an action plan
- Build structures that create peer learning opportunities
- Integrate QI rapid cycle improvement and measures
- Take the long view

An aerial photograph of a wide river valley. A multi-lane highway bridge spans across the river, with several cars visible on it. The surrounding landscape is lush with green trees and rolling hills under a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

PALLIATIVE CARE ROAD MAP

A GUIDE for living with serious illness and conditions
for patients and those who care for them

To download the PDF
or order printed copies at no charge:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/forpublichealthandhealthcareproviders/ruralhealth>

OR

<https://waportal.org/partners/home/washington-rural-palliative-care-initiative>



Four rural initiatives

[Minnesota-Stratis Health](#)
over 20 rural communities
offering palliative care

[Washington Rural Palliative
Care Initiative](#)

[North Dakota](#)
[Wisconsin](#)