



During the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of telemedicine increased significantly, but it still didn't solve all access to health care challenges for patients in remote areas.

“If you have a patient who lives several hours away from their clinician who is trying to deliver optimal service to them, or if they have to travel to get a test or to receive support care such as pharmaceuticals, critical supplies or a device that's going to help them in their recovery, they will have a lot of challenges to make that happen,” Sizer said.

Those challenges also could include a lack of transportation, ability to take time off work, access to childcare or the financial means required to travel. Drone use will significantly reduce those challenges and close the gap between the rural patient and their health care providers.

“There's a huge number of our patients in our country that are considered medically underserved,” Sizer said. “We needed a really great place that has some of the most extreme, most challenging conditions to test this. If we can do it in Presidio, we can do it anywhere. It's the perfect laboratory, and we're starting with these simple flights so that we can scale it to a much better solution; not only here but in other rural settings so that we can learn more from the experience.”

TTUHSC, a part of the Matador UAS Consortium, is spearheading the research initiative focused on developing and integrating drone technology for health care delivery in rural areas. The Matador UAS Consortium was co

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Molinar, a Presidio native, is passionate about her community’s access to health care and about using the latest technology to help them get healthy. In an area with no same-day delivery service, it could take a week to receive lifesaving medical supplies.

“Now we have telehealth so people can come to our clinics and get a checkup,” Molinar said. “But it’s no good if we don’t have medications. We need the drone technology to get medications in a time when they need it. Someone asked me for a glucometer and I took three days to find one.”

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