Congress stream: Partnerships and integrated care – connecting rural people and services

Alternate stream: Rural health research in practice – connecting for change

Abstract title: Telepaediatrics: Bridging the gap in knowledge and service delivery in rural and remote NSW

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Background:

There is limited access to paediatric services in rural NSW, particularly for children with developmental-behavioural problems. Telepaediatrics fulfils this gap in service delivery whilst simultaneously building the capacity of doctors and families locally. Royal Far West (RFW) undertook a pilot program to evaluate the effectiveness of telepaediatrics in supporting child health outcomes and empowering rural doctors. To our knowledge this is the first developmental-behavioural telepaediatric service being delivered in rural NSW.

Approach:

Nine children and their families participated in the program, which included an initial screening assessment, four therapy sessions and two review sessions. The pilot evaluated clinical outcomes, client satisfaction and quality improvement processes.

Outcomes/Results:

Paediatric therapy delivered via videoconferencing proved to be a successful medium for local doctors and families, increasing their knowledge and strategies in the area of behavioural management. Clinically, all children showed improvements for at least one of their behavioural concerns post therapy. The pilot also served to build ongoing collaborative relationships between RFW and rural doctors.

Take home message:

Telepaediatrics has the potential to fill a significant gap in service delivery in rural NSW. In addition, working with a paediatrician in this format can increase the knowledge and skills of doctors and families in the area of behavioural management.