

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

2017 NSW RURAL HEALTH AND RESEARCH CONGRESS

27 – 29 SEPTEMBER 2017, WAGGA WAGGA

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Concurrent Stream:

II) Healthy Rural Communities (equity and access to health care, primary health care, health promotion and prevention, integrated health services)

Keywords: Aged Health / Residential Aged Care

Abstract Title: Using telehealth to bridge the rural gap: A Dietetics example

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Background:

Health is increasingly utilising technology to ensure access and equity to health care. In MultiPurpose Services (MPS), engaging technology can mean access to many services not readily available on site, such as multidisciplinary services (MDS). Nyngan MPS, together with the ACI Living Well in MPS Collaborative, identified a gap in resident access to MDS, namely dietetics services. As malnutrition has a fundamental impact of resident's quality of life, functional ability and is also a major contributor to falls risk, this was identified as a priority area.

Approach:

A Western NSW Local Health District pilot program utilises the telehealth model to support access to Dietetic Services across the LHD. An established network with the district Dietician ensured access to the program and relevant processes. Key staff, familiar with telehealth platforms of wireless video conferencing between the MPS and XX hospital, were identified as clinical champions. A Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) methodology saw the change undertaken with one resident and two staff members. Processes were then refined and implemented over 6 months to ensure access for all residents. Outcomes were predicted to demonstrate an improved access to MDS by residents, quality of life and overall physical wellbeing, measured both quantitatively and qualitatively through numerical and observational data. Staff were predicted to have increased access to education via networked relationships to other services.

Outcomes / Results:

Interim data demonstrates positive outcomes with residents having access to appropriate services closer to home, an improved quality of life and greater interaction between staff and residents. Feedback through resident stories highlights benefits for both residents and staff, sharing learnings with others at Nyngan MPS. A complete data set, including baseline and follow up, will be available at the time of presentation. This model is transferable and low cost where telehealth equipment exists.

Take Home Message:

Access to MDS should not be restricted by geographical location. Technology is a platform which can provide care closer to home. Partnerships and networking strengthen rural and remote sites' ability to provide equitable and accessible services. The MPS Collaborative is contributing to excellence in rural health by ensuring small scale changes are shared.

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First time presenters are encouraged to apply. Please contact your mentor or Catherine Helps on 02 6686 2617 for any questions about submitting an abstract.