

# Specialist Telehealth hub

Using technology to provide patients in regional areas with access to leading specialists



## What?

Telehealth allows patients access to specialist care close to their home, through virtual consultation.

For people living in regional communities, telehealth can enhance patient experience by streamlining access to specialists, hospitals and other health service providers.

Implementing telehealth consultations in a regional general practice setting, strongly aligns with the principles of the Patient Centred Medical Home (PCMH) model of care. This team-based approach is rapidly evolving to become the future of primary health care in Australia and internationally.

Within a general practice operating as a PCMH, patients are offered a variety of e-visits, telephone encounters, group appointments, as well as visits with other team members and different health care practitioners. This provides a comprehensive and integrated service for patients.

## Why?

Due to a smaller population, patients in regional areas are less likely to be able to access all the services they need. This can place a significant burden on patients because of long wait times and extensive travel, as well as an impact to work and/or study commitments.

The general benefits of a virtual consultation between the specialist and patient in a general practice setting, include:

- more flexible and responsive access to specialist care
- reduced waiting time to see a specialist
- reduced travel time and costs
- less disruption to work or education
- improved communication between the health providers managing the patient's care.

## How?

Jindabyne Medical Practice's paediatric specialist telehealth hub was one of 13 initiatives supported by COORDINARE. It was part of a project designed to build the capacity and capability of our region's general practices to move towards a PCMH model of care.

With funding from COORDINARE, the practice was able to upgrade its telehealth facilities and up-skill staff in privacy and protocol systems. During the six-month trial implementation in mid-2018, local promotion across internal and external channels resulted in a significant increase in telehealth paediatric consultation with specialists in different geographic locations - mainly Canberra, Sydney and Bega.

The practice has since continued with the service and are looking to establish telehealth arrangements with specialists of other disciplines.

*“There has always been a great divide between city and regional health services but thankfully with initiatives such as this it will assist our medical specialists and ease the burden on country people.”*

*– Senator John Williams, Duty Senator for Eden-Monaro.*

## Want to get involved?

At different times COORDINARE offers funding to support initiatives such as this. Practices which do not apply or are not selected for funding can still work with us and explore other opportunities. If we are outside of a funding round, we have resources to support practices on their change journey.

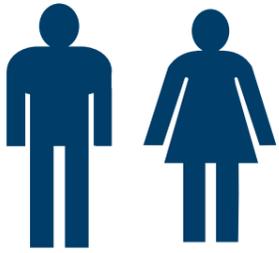
For further details on the steps involved to implement this model of care, visit <http://bit.ly/MOCtelehealthhub>. For more information or support contact your Health Coordination Consultant, or phone 1300 069 002.

## Outcomes

Figures sourced from Jindabyne Medical Practice PCMH final report

### Patient engagement

In the six-month trial period:



68 patients used the service



198 telehealth consultations took place



99% of telehealth patients were local residents of Jindabyne

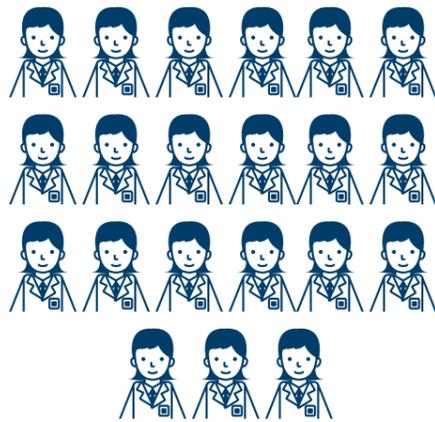


Less burden for patients  
reduced travel time and associated expenses, shorter wait times to see specialist

### Successful specialist partnerships



Canberra-based paediatrician now attending practice on regular basis



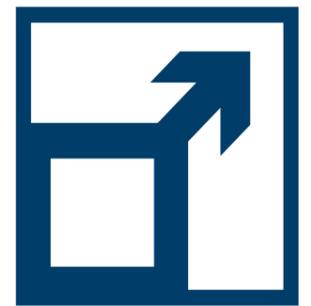
Dr Danielle Blake has conducted 21 on site consultations at the practice during the trial

### Provider up-skilling



Practice doctors and nurses better equipped to treat paediatric patients as a result of additional training and broader experience

### Scalable



Sustainable model supported by MBS billing which can be expanded for geriatric and palliative patients

## The specialist perspective



“As a visiting general paediatrician, I have found the facilities and support provided by Jindabyne Medical Practice excellent. We have plans underway to support the local community with telehealth follow-up appointments, after initial face-to-face appointments at the practice.

The medical and clerical staff have been enthusiastic and supportive of my clinics and great advocates for the local community in providing access to specialist services the patients would otherwise have to travel several hours to attend.

I look forward to continuing my association with Jindabyne Medical Practice and providing ongoing services to the local community both in place and by telehealth.”

Dr Danielle Blake, BMed MMed (Paed) FRACP

## The GP's perspective



“For interventions with paediatric patients we often focus on the parental benefits, and whilst the less travel and time off work for them is a significant benefit of this innovation, the children also benefit from experiencing less distress of being in the car for two hours for a short specialist consultation to then return for another two hour journey home - this is especially so for the younger child or for those with learning and behavioural concerns.

For me personally, the relationship we now have with paediatrician Dr Danielle Blake visiting our practice regularly, means we are working closely as a team which gives better case management for the children.

In addition, I have been able to up-skill and capacity build and because of the close network we now have with Dr Blake, there have been several times we were able to put a plan in place without direct specialist review.”

Dr Vicki Mattiazzo, B.App.Sc., BMBS (Hons) FRACGP