

The Angelina Effect

Introduction

Following a rapid and unanticipated increase in the referrals from GPs of women requesting genetic testing for breast cancer, the resources of the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District Hereditary Cancer Clinic (HCC) were under severe strain.

The project required facilitation of system improvements that resulted in efficiencies that directly supported better outcomes for women at risk of breast cancer.

The adoption and utilisation of the CORE Values were fundamental in the success of this project as the initiative fostered openness, respect and empowerment to women at risk of breast cancer.

A local innovative solution was developed, which resulted in the establishment of a Personal Risk Assessment (PRA) Clinic, with the objective of offering women accurate and personalised breast cancer risk advice. The project's aim was to offer the PRA to 100 per cent of referred eligible women.

Key activities

Increased media interest in the "breast cancer genes" led to increased community anxiety.

The project team created innovative and evidence-based solutions using existing, cost-effective resources.

This included the development and trial of a plain English guide to genetic testing and innovative model of care, offering safe triaging and assessment using the validated International Breast Cancer Intervention Study risk predictor.

Key achievements

Of 118 women referred, 90 per cent were offered a PRA clinic appointment (accepted by 74 per cent).

Ninety-nine per cent of women who attended the clinic rated their experiences positively.

A training package for genetic counsellors is now being developed for use in other sites in NSW and Australia.

