



FESTIVAL OF CONTAGIOUS IDEAS 2016



NEW SOUTH WALES
HEALTH INNOVATION
Symposium 2016

INTEGRATED HEALTHCARE

Psychogeriatric SOS: e-Outreach for rural Australia by clinicians for clinicians St Vincent's Health Network

Challenge

In rural Australia, older people with mental health problems and dementia are among the most disadvantaged. Due to professional shortages, staff are often isolated and patients are unable to access timely, meaningful help. Justice in resourcing is not addressed by traditional patient-to-clinician telehealth and fly-in services, nor do these foster partnerships within healthcare.

Creativity is required to tackle this challenge. There is good evidence that clinician-to-clinician case conferencing, supervision and education improves patient care, quality of mental health services and clinician confidence. It also improves diagnostic accuracy; management decisions and patient outcomes as well as reducing specialist referrals. On this basis we aimed to provide this in an efficient, timely way.



Solution

Psychogeriatric SOS is an international first. It is an up-skilling clinician-to-clinician service bringing multidisciplinary expertise via web-



conferencing to isolated clinicians in under-resourced rural areas. It assists clinicians to manage their vulnerable older patients, building capacity in rural services and encouraging dignity in ageing. This aligns with the Task-Shifting Recommendations.

This is proof-of-concept for an innovative model of service delivery, as well as creative problem-solving around barriers related to technological problems, communication issues, and change management.

Results

The service has established partnerships with rural local health districts, primary health networks and non-government organisations by setting up a purpose-built website, implementing clinician-to-clinician

web-conferencing, and up-skilling rural clinicians to achieve best practice for rural older people with mental health and dementia-related issues. We have improved communication between providers, and enhanced access to psychogeriatric expertise for older rural patients. Evaluation demonstrates that rural clinicians feel more supported and confident in delivering quality care for their older, rural patients.

Acknowledgements

The NSW Health Planning and Innovation Fund
The St Vincent's Hospital Curran Foundation
The NSW Institute of Psychiatry