



# TELEHEALTH NEWS

Latrobe Regional Hospital Quarterly Telehealth Newsletter

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## Koori Maternity Services now telehealth enabled

The Koori Maternity Services (KMS) program was developed by the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and the Department of Health almost 20 years ago.

The service began with 8 sites providing culturally appropriate maternity care and support for Koori and Torres Strait Islander women. This has since expanded to fourteen sites statewide, with a program objective to improve pregnancy journeys and optimise health outcomes for mothers and babies.

Ramahyuck District Aboriginal Corporation hosts one of two Gippsland KMS sites.

Located in a quiet suburban street in Morwell, the program provides a culturally safe space where women are able to access ante-natal and post-natal services.

Midwife Caroline Gray is the KMS coordinator and has been working at the service for almost 5 years, while her colleague Melita Maynard has been delivering care to the local community for fifteen years. Melita is an Aboriginal Maternity Health Worker whose role covers breast health; Caroline specialises in women's health and cervical screening.

"We offer support for external appointments and home visits," said Caroline. "When diagnostic testing or tertiary consultations are required, we assist with transport and help the women navigate a sometimes complex medical process."

Caroline and Melita recently welcomed the opportunity to partner with LRH and provide obstetric telehealth consultations to KMS clients, as an alternative to attending in person.

"We've found the time-saving to be a real positive," said Caroline. "Telehealth is allowing us to support our clients locally, without travel or waiting rooms. The women can make a cup of tea at KMS while their children play. It's a relaxed and familiar environment."

"Having the client feel comfortable is important for getting the best out of the contact, resulting in a more open exchange of information," Caroline said.

Post-operative telehealth review appointments for gynaecology procedures is another area in which Melita and Caroline (pictured below) can see KMS offering support in the future.

# 111,249

...patient kilometres saved  
since December 2016

*"I think telehealth can help to bring some control into people's lives, when sometimes that's not so easy to come by"*

- Caroline Gray, KMS Midwife



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LRH cancer services project coordinator Joanne Parr (L) and nurse practitioner candidate Danielle Roscoe

## New Symptom and Urgent Review Service enhances oncology outpatient care

South Gippsland and Baw Baw Shire oncology patients will soon have the option of receiving post-treatment support via telehealth, in addition to face-to-face and phone assessment services.

The new Symptom and Urgent Review initiative commenced in February and is being developed and implemented through a Department of Health and Human Services funding grant. Its introduction will be realised through a collaborative partnership between Latrobe Regional Hospital, Gippsland Southern Health Service and West Gippsland Healthcare Group.

Project coordinator Joanne Parr explained that the service will help to meet the needs of patients who experience adverse effects from Systemic Anti-Cancer Therapies (SACT), such as chemotherapy, targeted therapies or immunotherapy.

“Side effects of these treatments are more common than with most medicines and can cause adverse physical symptoms,” said Joanne. “Patients may also encounter increased emotional distress and uncertainty about self-management strategies.”

“What we are aiming to achieve is to introduce a model of care which optimises service provision for cancer patients receiving SACT.”

Clinical leadership and oversight of the project and service is being provided by Dr Tricia Wright, LRH Director of Cancer Services; while LRH Nurse Practitioner Candidates Danielle Roscoe and Cassandra Moore manage all of the clinical care and are the first port of call when advice is sought.

“The aim of the Symptom and Urgent Review project is to embed a unique model which enhances access to specialised oncology care and management, enabling improved patient outcomes in a regional area,” said Dr Wright. “The model also seeks to decrease Emergency Department presentations, inpatient hospital admissions and treatment delays.”

Danielle describes the service as being notably different to the standard design. “The concept LRH has developed will see Cass and I book patients in for face-to-face assessment only if deemed necessary, while utilising phone and video call contact to make this determination.”

“The introduction of telehealth is a key component of the service and will allow individuals receiving systemic anti-cancer therapy to access supportive care in the comfort of their own home,” said Cassandra. “This is a great step forward as it respects the needs of patients who are facing the challenges of ongoing treatment.”

The initiative has also seen the introduction of a dedicated support phone number, which is provided to all new chemotherapy patients.

With the project now in full swing, plans are underway to explore the capacity of the partner sites to host supported video calls, connecting patients to the Symptom and Urgent Review clinical team if joining from home is not possible.

## Milestone 400<sup>th</sup> telehealth appointment delivered

LRH recently delivered its 400<sup>th</sup> outpatient appointment via telehealth since December 2016.

The service first began in 2015, offering supported video calls which connected Gippsland paediatric patients to tertiary specialists in Melbourne.

During the past few years, the model of care has evolved and expanded to include multiple clinical areas throughout the hospital, as well as supporting the provision of patient education.

There are now more than thirty clinics and programs offering remote care via video call.

Some of the more recent additions include:

- Nephrology
- Obstetrics and Gynaecology
- Symptom and Urgent Review Service
- Hand Therapy Clinic

New opportunities continue to emerge and community members are increasingly requesting the service in the outpatient consulting suites.

LRH welcomes feedback from patients and carers and is open to suggestions for how the service can better meet their needs.



LRH celebrates its 400<sup>th</sup> video consultation

## Video Remote Interpreting

LRH is pleased to be able to offer access to Auslan interpreters via video call for outpatient specialist appointments.

The service is a viable alternative to face-to-face interpreting and is capably provided by Auslan Connections.

LRH invites GP clinics to request this service when referring new patients, where required.

Consulting suite staff will confirm with the patient via SMS when a video call interpreter has been arranged.

For more information about the Video Remote Interpreting service, visit: <http://auslanconnections.com.au/services/video-remote-interpreting/>



LRH clinical lead of obstetrics and gynaecology, Dr Tzippora Ben-Harim

### Meet Our Clinicians: Dr Tzippora Ben-Harim, Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist

Dr Tzippora Ben-Harim is an obstetrician and gynaecologist who provides services to Gippsland patients at Latrobe Regional Hospital. Originally from Israel, she attended medical school and undertook her training there.

After moving to Australia in 2011 along with her husband and children, Dr Ben-Harim initially worked at the Royal Women's Hospital urogynaecology unit.

"I planned to live in Australia for 2 years and work at the Royal Women's, but I fell in love with the country and decided to stay," said Dr Ben-Harim.

"In early 2014 I commenced working at LRH. During 2015, I also took the position of the clinical lead of obstetrics and gynaecology. This role has allowed me to provide leadership and guidance both for our staff - doctors, midwives and nurses - and for the smaller hospitals in Gippsland. LRH is the largest hospital in Gippsland and provides the highest level of care in the region."

Life is busy for Dr Ben-Harim, who provides specialist services in Melbourne in addition to her role at LRH.

"I try and balance work and life," said Dr Ben-Harim. "I enjoy running and hiking and participate in events that raise money for issues that are close to my heart. The last one was Run For The Kids in April."

Dr Ben-Harim recently began offering telehealth appointments for her Gippsland patients. She can see the service expanding as patients become more conscious of alternative ways to see their specialist, particularly when face-to-face appointments are not clinically imperative. "Australia is a very large country and travelling to see the doctor is difficult for various reasons," Dr Ben-Harim said.

"I think patients, doctors and other health care providers are becoming more aware of this option."

After recently establishing a collaborative partnership with Koori Maternity Services in Morwell for supported telehealth appointments, Dr Ben-Harim has already observed the benefits. "One of the key advantages for the patient is that it allows them to have the consultation in a place they know. This reduces the barrier of sitting in a large, busy waiting area. Also, it saves considerable travel time."

The positives from a clinician's perspective are also becoming more evident to Dr Ben-Harim as she gradually embeds the telehealth model of care into her clinic. "For us, patients are more likely to attend the appointment. Additionally, having another health care provider support the patient in a community setting helps to increase compliance with the recommendations."

Dr Ben-Harim is optimistic about the model's future expansion. "As we use the telehealth service more often, we will be able to broaden the spectrum of clinical situations where it is being utilised."

## Did you know?

Coolamons are traditional Aboriginal carrying vessels with curved sides. They are created from carved hardwood, tree roots or sometimes cut-out bark. Oval-shaped Coolamons were traditionally used by Aboriginal women as a gathering tool for food; deeper Coolamons were used for carrying water, as well as to cradle babies. The rocking motion helped put babies to sleep.

The small carving pictured below was a gift presented to Koori Maternity Services in Morwell from a local family, as a gesture of appreciation for their care.



## Contact Us

The LRH telehealth facilitator can be contacted Monday to Friday during business hours:

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For information on patient eligibility and available resources, visit the 'LRH Telehealth' webpage:

<http://www.lrh.com.au/important-info/patient-information/specialist-outpatient-telehealth>

## Coming Soon to LRH Telehealth:

- Regional Amputee Clinic
- Lactation Consultant Services
- Paediatric Infant Perinatal Emergency Retrieval/Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PIPER/PICU)

LRH acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, the Gunai Kurnai people, and pays respects to their Elders past and present.