

telehealth news

Latrobe Regional Hospital Telehealth Newsletter

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PIPER telehealth pilot goes 'live'

LRH is one of seven Victorian hospitals participating in a telehealth pilot with the Royal Children's Hospital Paediatric Infant Perinatal Emergency Retrieval (PIPER) program, commencing in the first quarter of 2020.

PIPER clinicians provide telephone advice and patient retrieval 24 hours per day, with emergency calls recorded for quality and education purposes. The introduction of real-time video calls will enhance the support already available to critically ill babies, infants and children requiring specialist paediatric care.

The establishment of 'virtual meeting rooms' will allow for live video to be relayed from the referring hospital and viewed by the PIPER consultants.

Angela Scully (pictured) manages the Thomson Women's Children and Birthing Unit, a state-of-the-art obstetric and paediatric facility at LRH.

"PIPER Telehealth will enable the consultants to see the patient in real time, observe vital signs and provide expert advice," said Angela. "Previously, we've relied on verbal relay of information."

Angela also noted the benefits of visual assessment for determining when a retrieval is required. "Keeping the mother and baby together is what we aim to achieve where possible, in preference to separation," she said.

"The pilot is particularly timely as we increase acuity within the Thomson Ward special care nursery."



Myeloma patient Albert talks about the new Alfred/LRH Telehealth Clinic with Laurie Newman

LRH launches Multiple Myeloma Telehealth Clinic in partnership with The Alfred

Located at Latrobe Regional Hospital, Gippsland Cancer Care Centre (GCCC) provides comprehensive cancer care services including chemotherapy, haematology and radiotherapy.

Depending on the diagnosis and treatment, patients of GCCC often receive shared care between regional specialists and consultants in Melbourne.

Thanks to a new initiative, many of GCCC's multiple myeloma patients will now see their travel reduced for metro appointments.

An established partnership with The Alfred's Myeloma Clinic has paved the way for the introduction of supported video call consultations, keeping the clinical contact at a local level.

Commencing in February, the service will be offered to local patients with multiple myeloma, following referral by their treating haematologist at LRH.

In addition to alleviating travel requirements for rural patients and their families, it is anticipated the benefits will extend to improved coordination of care.

Laurie Newman is a clinical nurse consultant at LRH and will host the supported video call consults.

"We're looking forward to the opportunities this service will provide in terms of discussing the treatment plan with all parties involved," said Laurie.

"Patients have already responded positively to the news that they will be able to see their Alfred specialist without the trip to Melbourne."

Telehealth itself is not a new concept to The Alfred/LRH myeloma partnership, with multidisciplinary care team meetings regularly taking place via video call since 2018.

The remote clinic will complement the intent of the MDMs, facilitating best practice standards in cancer care.

Appointments for the Multiple Myeloma Telehealth Clinic will be booked on an as-needs basis, where clinically appropriate.

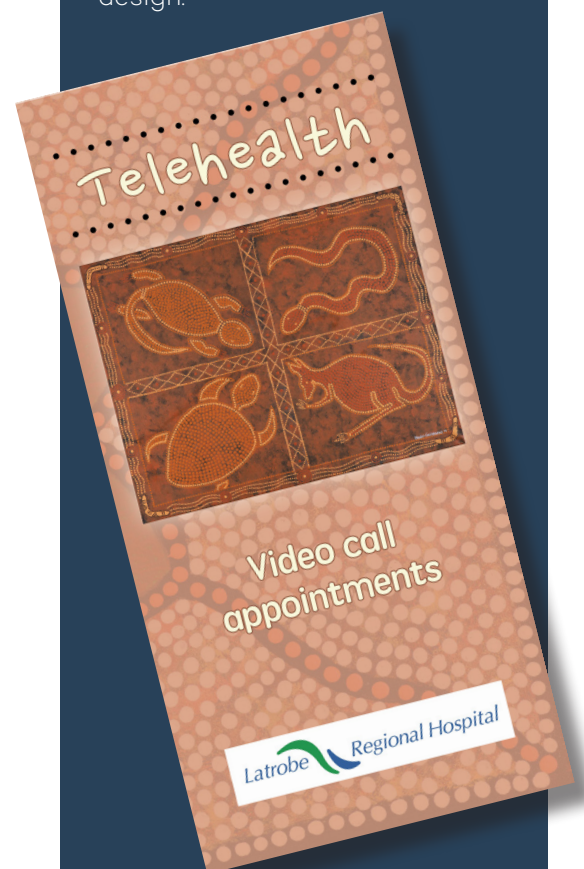
Culturally appropriate telehealth brochure developed

LRH has developed a culturally appropriate telehealth brochure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and clients.

The brochure features the paintings of Rhonda Hood and Gunai Kurnai artist Aunty Helen Treadgold, whose artwork forms part of a permanent creative collection on display at LRH.

The resource will be accessible through the Koori Health Liaison Officers within Gippsland hospitals, as well as being included in patient information packs upon discharge.

Valuable feedback received from clients and staff within Aboriginal community has informed the brochure's final design.



Video calls make consultations possible for bushfire-affected communities

In the wake of this summer's devastating bushfires in East Gippsland, LRH is assisting patients who are unable to travel in person to outpatient appointments by offering telehealth as an optional alternative.

In situations where it is clinically appropriate, video calls can be arranged for review appointments - and in some cases, initial appointments - to ease the burden of significant travel and assist with overcoming the challenges of temporary road closures.

Patients are encouraged to contact their LRH clinic and enquire about having a remote appointment, either from home, at work, or supported by their referring rural medical service.

General practices, Bush Nursing Centres and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations are welcome to contact the LRH telehealth facilitator on 5173 8022 for more information.

The Commonwealth has announced free counselling and additional mental health support for individuals, families and emergency services workers affected by the bushfires.

New Medicare items for health professionals to support those affected by bushfires can be found [here](#).

The [Better Access Bushfire Recovery initiative](#) is inclusive of telehealth consultations.



Improving access to paediatric appointments in Latrobe Valley schools

Funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, the Community Nurse in Schools initiative seeks to provide a place-based approach to improve the health and wellbeing of children attending primary school.

Currently eight such schools in the Latrobe Valley receive regular visits from Latrobe Community Health Service (LCHS) nurses.

Direct support in response to identified health needs is provided, as well as assistance with information and advice about healthy behaviours.

The outreach program links children and families to community-based health and wellbeing services and ensures children have the opportunity to receive a health assessment.

The LCHS Community Nurse in Schools program currently services primary education settings in Morwell, Moe, Traralgon, Yallourn North and Churchill.

The schools are in geographic areas identified as having vulnerable populations, with complex care needs of children a primary consideration.

LRH is pleased to be partnering with LCHS to enable improved access to consultant paediatricians at these sites, via video call appointments.

The initiative will see children and their families supported by the nurses for review consultations within the education setting.

LRH Chief Medical Officer Dr Pip Hawkings explains there are often challenges with attendance once the referral has been accepted.

"Families frequently find it difficult to travel to the outpatient clinic, resulting in non-attended appointments," said Dr Hawkings.

"The referral is in place, but without the family's involvement, the treatment is not able to progress."

"This initiative will see a gap overcome, with the school nurses providing vital assistance in coordinating follow-up care."

While initial appointments will be face-to-face, the school nurses will be able to join these consults remotely, with the families' consent.

Surgical follow-up via telemedicine

Since last year, General Surgeon Mr Neil Jayasuriya has been providing video call consults when post-surgical contacts are clinically suited to telemedicine.

This is helping an increasing number of outpatients avert an additional visit to LRH and avoid the need to travel for their follow-up review, at two or six weeks.



Visiting General Surgeon Mr Neil Jayasuriya



L to R: Kath Hudson and Bruce Poole from the LRH Prosthetics and Orthotics Service connect via video call with Peter, who is a client of the Amputee Clinic

Contact us

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

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New model of care for Regional Amputee Clinic

The LRH Prosthetics and Orthotics team provides care for clients living in the Gippsland region and offers a complete range of external prosthetic devices to child and adult limb amputees.

The treating team is composed of specialist rehabilitation physicians, prosthetists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

In recognition of the challenges extensive road travel presents to rural clients, the service is establishing a remote clinic model using digital health technology.

Expected to commence in February, the initiative will see enhanced equity of access to rehabilitation services, resulting in improved solutions for ambulation and mobility for amputees in the far east of Victoria.

Telehealth calls will enable clients to connect to appointments from home, or seek a supported video call consultation with the involvement of their local GP.

Regaining independence is a key focus of the amputee management program and the benefits of keeping the contact closer to home are broader than simply avoiding lengthy road trips.

“Seeing the client in the home setting increases our knowledge of their needs and informs our responses to issues as they arise,” said Bruce Poole, Prosthetics and Orthotics Manager at LRH.

“Where the client’s local practitioner is involved, the aim is to create a closer working relationship, improving communication and enhancing knowledge transfer in amputee management.”

As Bruce explains, the telehealth consults won’t replace face-to-face contacts, but hopefully keep travel needs to a minimum. “There will still be a requirement for prosthetic adjustments and gait assessments to take place onsite at LRH.”

With almost half of all visits to the amputee clinic represented by East Gippslanders - who travel an average journey in excess of 300km per contact - the need was clearly evident.

“Visits to the clinic are often due to concerns which could have been addressed remotely, essentially averting considerable travel for the amputee and their carer,” Bruce Poole said.

“If we can determine what parts we need for the prosthetic limb via a telehealth

For information on patient eligibility and available resources, visit the [LRH Telehealth webpage](#)



consultation in advance, we will be well prepared for when the client attends the clinic in person.”

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

