

The lumps and bumps of establishing a rural multidisciplinary paediatric feeding clinic

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Background: Paediatric feeding is an area of clinical specialty for Speech Pathologists and Dietitians. Over the past three years, an increase in referrals at Goulburn Valley Health (GV Health) has identified the need for a complex multidisciplinary feeding clinic. Specialised assessment and management of infants and children with complex feeding needs in the 0-5 year age group, has emerged as an area where Speech Pathologists with expertise in paediatric feeding, can effectively contribute to improving patient outcomes and reducing hospital re-admissions. Historically, GV Health paediatric clients with complex feeding issues were provided with inpatient intervention by the Speech Pathology and Dietetics clinicians. Timely access to community based paediatric services for ongoing treatment was problematic due to long waiting lists. Delay in continuation of treatment places these children at nutritional and developmental risk. As a result children in this cohort are more likely to develop sensory and oral aversions to eating as well as defensiveness surrounding meal times.

Aim: To develop a Speech Pathology led multidisciplinary allied health feeding clinic to provide a clinical pathway for treatment of medically based feeding conditions whilst children wait for update into a community service.

Method: An area of emerging risk through increased identification and referral of complex paediatric feeding problems, prompted discussion between the paediatric and allied health teams to consider an appropriate management pathway. Several budget proposals were unsuccessful in securing funding for the clinic. External funding from Department of Health and Human Services was received in 2015 to conduct a pilot project under the Advanced Practitioner Model.

Results: Development and initial findings of the pilot project will be presented.

Discussion: Regional Victorian children have limited access to a non admitted specialised complex feeding service. Continued advocacy for this client group and service will be a high priority.