

# Allied Health Front and Centre in a Regional Critical Care Unit – a Case Study

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## Background

Morbidly obese patients are challenging for critical care unit (CCU) teams, especially in regional hospitals. This case study describes the problem solving and teamwork required to care for a 220kg critically unwell patient at Northeast Health Wangaratta (NHW).

Mr G (50yrs) was admitted to CCU in January 2015, with respiratory failure and subsequent cardiac arrest requiring 9min of CPR and intubation on the background of obesity hypoventilation syndrome and COPD. Occupational Therapy, Dietetics and Physiotherapy were involved to achieve optimal pressure care, nutrition, upright positioning, and early mobilisation/rehabilitation to reduce morbidity and mortality. Complex family issues required Social Work input.

## Methods

An extra wide bariatric bed and full mattress replacement was hired Day 1 of admission. Bed mobility/turning required six staff members. Mr G was unable to sit fully upright while intubated as NHW did not possess appropriate resources to safely accommodate his weight and reduced conscious state. Multiple attempts to hire a chair or ICU bed with FullChair® features, were unsuccessful. Attempts to borrow equipment from other hospitals were also unsuccessful. Purchase was not possible. A TotalCare plus ICU Bed (Hill-Rom) with FullChair® and 'turn-assist' was eventually sourced on free trial. XL slings and Liftpants (Liko) were purchased to permit hoist transfer and commence gait retraining.

## Results

Mr G was extubated Day 6, sat upright Day 8, and stood in Liftpants via hoist Day 17. Immobility resulted in three, Stage 2 pressure areas and global weakness. Following ongoing allied health intervention, discharge home occurred Day 35, following a home visit.

## Discussion

NHW was not prepared for a 220kg critically unwell patient. Sourcing appropriate bariatric equipment was extremely difficult and time consuming resulting in pressure injuries, delayed mobilisation and staff injuries. An integrated approach, involving multiple allied health disciplines, played a significant role in achieving a positive patient outcome.