

Virtual Fracture Clinic (VFC)

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Patients living outside the major city of Dubbo in western NSW travel hundreds of kilometres for management of simple fractures. Treatment incurs personal and financial costs to patients and family in time off work and school, travel, food and accommodation. This cost multiplies with each visit. Dubbo's weekly fracture clinic averaged over 110 patients, half travelling from outside Dubbo. The clinic regularly ran late with overtime costs for staff, and out of town patient's returning home after dark. WNSWLHD is dedicated to improving local service access for its population, therefore provision of fracture management closer to home was seen as a worthwhile goal.

VFC was initiated by a multidisciplinary team allowing patients to retain specialist orthopaedic review, while fracture management is local. Patients are referred from a peripheral ED, GP, or are initially seen at Dubbo fracture clinic with follow up then locally. VFC patient x-rays, now taken locally, are viewed electronically by the orthopaedic registrar. A management plan is sent to the local site where casting is carried out by a physiotherapist or nurse.

Implementation was initiated in two peripheral sites employing physiotherapists, however is now available in fourteen towns, not all employing a physiotherapist. VFC now includes Dubbo residents seen at fracture clinic not requiring further x-ray or doctor review, having cast removal in the physiotherapy department during the week.

In 12 months this project has decreased fracture clinic numbers in Dubbo to 80. There have been 261 patients with 506 OOS. The clinic finishes on time with clinic physiotherapists decreasing from three to two. It has saved patients 176,522km of travel, with over \$190,820 in car and wage related costs alone. Patient savings average \$377 per visit.

Surveys results show patients and staff satisfaction is very high, while agreeing patients continue to receive a high quality service.