

Embedding Telehealth through Allied Health Innovation Grants

BACKGROUND: Hunter New England Local Health District (HNELHD) is a large organisation within NSW Health that covers 25 LGAs, including metropolitan, regional and rural sites, and has over 16,000 employees (approximately 1500 Allied Health). For a decade, a key focus of HNELHD has been increasing the utilisation of clinical telehealth to improve access to services and reduce the impact of our large geographical area on our patients and their families. To support this, in 2015 an Allied Health Telehealth Equipment Grants Initiative was developed to encourage clinicians to establish innovative clinical telehealth services.

METHOD: An application process was developed that outlined eligibility criteria and requirements. All Allied Health staff providing direct patient care were encouraged to submit a project that could benefit through the use of desktop and specialised telehealth equipment. The grant process also allowed clinicians to formalise innovative projects, gaining executive support and empowering the clinician.

RESULTS: From 2015 to 2017, 32 allied health clinical telehealth projects were awarded grants. A reporting mechanism ensured there was ongoing accountability to complete the project, and provided an opportunity to gather feedback and learnings, and troubleshoot any issues. Once the application, review and reporting process was established, it was easy to offer grants in subsequent years.

DISCUSSION: These grants greatly increased uptake of telehealth by allied health clinicians in HNELHD, and is one of the key factors in why HNELHD performs over 50% of NSW's Clinical Telehealth activity. Many projects have been recognised at the District's annual High Value Health Care Awards. A guide and resources for Allied Health staff introducing a telehealth model of care was developed based on learnings from the projects.

For more information, contact
clare.daley@health.nsw.gov.au

Hunter New England Local Health District

