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# Telehealth bringing Tertiary Pain Services to the Bush

Initiative Type

Service Improvement

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Close

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## Summary

The project trialled persistent pain patient medical specialist initial assessment and review consultation via telehealth instead of face-to-face. To maximise assessment and intervention effectiveness over telehealth, the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH) multidisciplinary pain centre selected the allied health professionals and general practitioners required for each

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telehealth conference based on each individual referral. To combat medical specialist apprehension regarding the inability to perform a physical assessment over telehealth, the local physiotherapist was regularly utilised during sessions. In 2018, Central West HHS (CWHHS) partnered with the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Professor Tess Cramond Multidisciplinary Pain Centre (RBWH multidisciplinary pain centre) to develop a telehealth service project to improve accessibility to persistent pain tertiary services for CWHHS patients.

### Key dates

Feb 2018

Nov 2019

### Implementation sites

Central West Hospital and Health Service

### Partnerships

Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital

## Key Contacts

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## **Aim**

To increase local accessibility to tertiary level multidisciplinary persistent pain services.

## **Benefits**

Establishing the sustainability of this new service by informing stakeholders, integrating the service into existing policies/procedures and upskilling the Central West HHS allied health team to enhance multidisciplinary care at a local level. The project has successfully introduced a new service without the use of additional funding or increasing patient travel subsidy scheme fees.

## **Background**

As a rural and remote health district, Central West HHS persistent pain patients have been required to travel long distances to coastal tertiary persistent pain facilities for initial consultation, and then further management. This inaccessibility has led to a longstanding culture of low general practitioner referrals to persistent pain facilities due to the reluctance of patients to travel and spend extended time periods away from family and occupation.

## **Solutions Implemented**

The project utilised a number of outcome measures:

- General practitioner and allied health surveys were developed and distributed to gain baseline data.
- Patient and medical specialist satisfaction surveys were distributed after each consultation to gauge consumer satisfaction.
- Pre or peri trial referral and consultation numbers were recorded to gauge health professional and patient uptake.

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## Evaluation and Results

The project trial was officially completed on 3rd December 2019. Trial results were all extremely positive; At the trial's conclusion, the RBWH Multidisciplinary Pain Centre and CWHHS made the collaborative decision to permanently establish the telehealth persistent pain model.

## Lessons Learnt

The power and potential of telehealth in delivering tertiary care locally.

## References

Pain Australia. (2019). Painful facts. Retrieved from <https://www.painaustralia.org.au/about-pain/painful-facts>

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