

Engaging and empowering clinicians to provide a sustainable telehealth service

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The key to a sustainable telehealth service is to engage and empowering clinicians.

Planning a sustainable telehealth system involves some key elements that need to be met to ensure the system will become embedded and seen as normal work practice. Some of the key elements include initial engagement with management, ensuring all parties are consulted, policies and procedures are in developed, correct technology is used, data is recorded accurately, patient and staff satisfaction surveys are completed and then all this data collated and fed back to all parties, assessed and adjusted.

The telehealth team in the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service have successfully engaged many clinicians across the disciplines to create a sustainable telehealth service which is now embedded into normal work practice and are currently leading the state in regards to the number of telehealth occasions of service.

In the rural setting where allied health clinicians are required to travel to various facilities, telehealth offers a service allowing the clinician better utilisation of time for themselves and for the patient.

When establishing a new service the key element is engagement of management. This includes attending management meetings, educating and providing documentation to have their support. Further education with teams and departments is required to give an over view of how to incorporate telehealth into everyday practice. Identifying key team members who will be the drivers to discuss further how to details.

Where possible it is important for the telehealth team to be involved in the first interaction/consultation in the form of checking equipment, processes and providing guidance where required.

We have developed work instructions and procedures to ensure telehealth is systemised and is not person dependant. We have an overarching governance/procedure and then local work instructions on how to apply telehealth in the local department.

We ask that patient satisfaction surveys are completed from clients as well as clinician satisfaction surveys, which provides valuable information and where the system is failing and where it is doing well.

To create a sustainable service, each department must take ownership of their own service and make it their own. The telehealth team advise on the best practice but local processes must be put in place according to their staffing levels and local processes.

If the key elements are all met and regularly reviewed, telehealth can be embedded and become a sustainable service.