

Bringing prostate cancer education to rural and regional communities

Julie Sykes¹, Lisa Fodero², Nick Brook³, R Jenkin⁴

¹The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia; ²Health Consult; ³Consultant urological surgeon; ⁴WA Cancer and Palliative Care Network

Prostate Cancer Foundation Australia (PCFA) launched its Rural Education Roadshow program in 2013. Funded through the Commonwealth Government, and modelled on the Western Australia Cancer and Palliative Care Network framework, the program brought a structured prostate cancer education program to regional, rural and remote communities across Australia.

The roadshow aimed to:

- improve local knowledge and skills of local health care providers from all disciplines who come into contact with prostate cancer patients
- deliver education directly to those affected by prostate cancer to engage with them on how to improve quality of life with prostate cancer diagnosis, while addressing issues around survivorship.

The roadshow provided the opportunity for local health professionals to explore the complexities of treatment and increase expertise in regional areas to support patients through their cancer journey. The roadshow was delivered by a multidisciplinary team including a urologist, oncologist and a prostate care nurse. Local clinicians or Visiting Medical Officers (VMO) were utilised to ensure content reflected local pathways and promoted interdisciplinary networking.

Two sessions were delivered at each roadshow event; one targeting health professionals, the other, community members affected by prostate cancer. Content for the health professional session included information on diagnosis, treatment and side effect management of both localised and advanced prostate cancer. The community session focused on coping with treatment and side effects, survivorship and support.

Program evaluation was undertaken to determine if the roadshow met objectives. Data were collected from multiple sources using surveys and interviews with PCFA personnel and those participating in the education sessions. Ethics approval was obtained from the Australian Department of Health Ethics Committee.

Key evaluation findings demonstrated a positive impact on health professionals. Overall the majority of health professionals reported an increase in their knowledge of both diagnostics and treatment of prostate cancer. 89% of respondents agreed that sessions increased confidence in supporting and managing patients with prostate cancer, and a high proportion retained this view at least three months post

event. Consumers reported an increase in knowledge of effects from treatment and when to seek further help in relation to the effects of their disease and treatment. 86% of consumer attendees agreed that attending the session increased empowerment in managing issues relating to prostate cancer.

The roadshow has been an effective program for delivering education through an outreach model to both health professionals and community groups with potential to apply this model to other disease types.