Janelle Jakowenko

Growing up in the bush meant telehealth made sense to Janelle Jakowenko from the moment she heard about it. She has been working in the health care industry for almost 20 years, initially as a medical photographer and more recently as a telehealth coordinator, researcher and advisor. She started working in the field of telehealth in 2002, when video conferencing was done via a number of telephone lines (ISDN) and the industry was only theorising about the uses of a personally controlled electronic health record. In recent years she has conducted research in the field of telehealth in developing countries, telepaediatrics, teledermatology and telecardiology. Since the inception of telehealth item numbers she has played a pivotal role in the development of telehealth primary health care. Janelle worked as a consultant to the Royal Australian Collage of General Practitioners (RACGP) and was part of the project team that supported the development of the RACGP Standards for general practices offering video consultations in 2011. At the RACGP she has been the primary author on the Advice of Skype statement, Telehealth Implementation Guidelines Version 3.0, the Telehealth Active Learning Module, six specialty telehealth guidelines and a number of other resources. Since August 2012 she has headed up the telehealth program at the Australian Medicare Local Alliance. This program was funded by the Department of Health and Ageing under the Connecting Health Services Initiative. Thirteen telehealth support officers (TSOs) throughout Medicare Locals (MLs) around the country are part of this initiative. A further six MLs independently obtained funding through the same tender. Since their placement, beginning July 2012, valuable lessons have been learnt about uptake of telehealth in rural general practice. Video conferencing in rural general practice goes far beyond clinical benefits and MBS item numbers. Clinicians can link up with colleagues, education providers, provide remote mentoring and link collaborative care teams, leading to improved support of the rural workforce.