Maximising client outcomes through improved service delivery and data reporting

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In July 2012 the Country Referral Unit assumed operational responsibility for the Country Home Link program, which facilitates the discharge of country clients from metropolitan hospitals.

An opportunity existed to redesign the service response to these referrals, in order to facilitate the patient journey for rural and remote clients. This is particularly important for Indigenous clients who need to return to country to help their own healing process. The process needs to work equally well for a client returning to the remote APY lands, or returning to Mt Gambier. Having current service information means timely discharges to save bed days, and monitoring occupancy levels means not over-committing country resources.

Our aim is to look at the existing processes, to streamline and automate as much data capture as possible. Service availability needs to be accurate so we can provide rapid referral confirmation to facilitate the discharge of country patients.

Streamlined reporting and entry and exit processes are just part of the client journey chain. By strengthening clinical handover practices we seek to reduce risk and improve information flow. We have to know what services are available, and get a commitment from the local health unit to deliver these services. This includes drafting an escalation process to be used if the requested service is not available. For the patient to experience a seamless transition from hospital to home, all the pieces need to fall into place.

To date we have developed data quality audits that allow the monitoring of outstanding discharge summaries. This assists in maximising the revenue for country generated by the packages. Progressing to extracting our data directly has improved our ability to meet reporting obligations. We will develop a robust seven-day service model, which will include intake officers working closely with clinical support staff to ensure referrals are responded to within the two-hour timeframe. This is critical to avoid delaying client discharges.

Other improvements have included increasing the Country Home Link package occupancy by 12%, redesigning the service contact information database, improved crystal reporting to track data errors, and documentation to support improved data collection at local site level.

With the further roll out of the Country Referral Unit in 2013, there will be one unit coordinating metro to country referrals, utilising a ‘no wrong door’ approach. By working together, we can make a real difference in helping our country clients get home.