Developing eligibility, prioritisation and discharge criteria for podiatry across country South Australia

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Aim: To develop and implement state-wide criteria for patient eligibility, prioritisation and discharge guidelines that are accepted by all podiatrists working for Country Health South Australia (CHSA).

Method: Following the appointment of an advanced clinical lead (ACL) podiatrist in February 2012 a review of the podiatry services across the 11 clusters that make up CHSA was carried out between February and May 2012. This was done by meeting with all of the podiatrists in CHSA on an individual basis, as teams and in regional groups.

From this review it was established that there was no consistency in any aspect of podiatry practice.

A whole of CHSA meeting was held in June 2012 with 95% attendance. All the issues and barriers facing each of the teams were discussed in an open environment and four areas were chosen as priorities to be addressed.

Four working parties were established and each group was mandated to review the issue, collect information from each site with the agreement that for the first time there would be a culture of openly sharing information.

All of the separate teams’ documentation regarding eligibility, prioritisation and discharge policies, where it existed, was collated by the group. A search of the relevant evidence base was carried out. A draft set of criteria was developed and sent to all relevant stakeholders for consultation.

Relevance: By agreeing to implement state-wide standards the inequity and disparity of podiatry services can be addressed and the ‘post code’ element of service provision be removed.

Results: The establishment of a state-wide professional group has resulted in creation of state-wide standardised criteria for eligibility, a prioritisation matrix and discharge guidelines.
Service reform proposals were presented to their colleagues with ongoing implementation.

**Conclusion:** For the first time ever in CHSALHN, podiatry teams will be working to common standards in terms of eligibility, prioritisation of patients and services. With clear discharge guidelines, services will be equipped to review their caseload and tailor services to those patients with the greatest need or those who will gain the most health benefit from the services they receive.

Podiatrists will have the support of clearly written, evidence-based standards and advocacy and support of the ACL podiatrist through the change process of service remodelling.