

## Spreading epilepsy services across Australia—going online

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**Introduction:** Living in rural and remote areas presents unique challenges, one being limited access to health care. In these settings, online support, services, education and information can be valuable and effective.

Epilepsy can impose a substantial burden, and management is more than just treating seizures. Surveys and studies show a deep unmet need in the community regarding epilepsy and seizure first aid education.<sup>1</sup> Increased epilepsy knowledge and awareness has shown to improve self-management, seizure control, seizure first aid and safety precautions, thereby reducing hospital admissions.

To improve equity and access to epilepsy information and education across Australia, online learning tools, resources and courses for different target audiences were developed.

Regular epilepsy education sessions, workshops, meetings and emergency medication training are now conducted via webinar, allowing access to anyone across Australia as long as there is internet access and phone.

**Purpose:** To demonstrate effective delivery of epilepsy education and support online.

**Method:** A number of online epilepsy courses and self management tools for different audiences were launched in June 2012. There are currently eight courses and seven online tools/resources. Participants provide personal information including geographical location along with feedback (which in some cases is optional). Webinar feedback is obtained after the session.

**Results:** Overall, clients geographical spread is 66% urban and 34% rural. This percentage is also represented in users of our online self-management tools. Figures below have been collected from July 2012 to June 2014.

Users of the online training and education resources are 828 (73%) urban and (311) 27% rural.

Webinars have been delivered to 21 (37%) urban and 36 (63%) rural regions.

Online seizure diary has been used by 742 (66%) urban and 380 (34%) rural clients.

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<sup>1</sup> O'Hara KA. First aid for seizures: the importance of education and appropriate response. *Journal Child Neurol.* 2007 May;22(5 Suppl):30S-7S.

**Discussion:** Lack of epilepsy knowledge leads to inappropriate or inadequate responses to seizures, increasing the risk of injury or serious consequences.

Our online services are reaching across the country to areas of need. Considering over two-thirds (69%) of Australians live in major cities,<sup>2</sup> our reach to rural regions has been consistent with this figure, even higher with webinar sessions.

Organisations must be strategic in the design and delivery of services to ensure ongoing viability and optimal reach. Online services and information represent an efficient mechanism to do this and meet growing demand in a sustainable manner.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/factsheets/2011/fs201103.html>