

Hawke's Bay PHO – Nurse Led Respiratory Clinic Pilot

Interview with Trish Freer, Health Programme Manager

Purpose of initiative

The aim of the project was to improve self-managed healthcare for clients with chronic respiratory conditions by training primary care nurses to provide a range of services previously delivered only in secondary care.

Background

This was a pilot project of nurse-led respiratory clinics located in General Practices delivering primary care in Hawke's Bay. The project has been jointly implemented by Health Hawke's Bay PHO, the Hawke's Bay District Health Board and Asthma Hawke's Bay. The catalyst for the project came from the concerns of a Respiratory Nurse Specialist and an Associate Charge Nurse Manager working in the DHB, that people with chronic respiratory conditions were falling through service gaps between acute and primary care services, and that Emergency Department presentations and hospital admission rates of acute exacerbations of chronic respiratory conditions were high. Whilst the motivation for the project was to reduce unnecessary hospital admissions, the emphasis was on the co-ordination and streamlining of client healthcare, focusing on early detection and timely management of chronic conditions in primary care. Funding for this project was provided from reserves from the CarePlus funding stream.

Healthcare, including education and health promotion, was to be provided primarily by Practice Nurses (PN) in General Practice, with the ongoing support of General Practitioners (GPs), Respiratory Nurse Specialists (RNSs), and Respiratory Technicians. This approach was strengthened by the nomination of Respiratory Nurse Champions at each participating practice. These champions assumed primary responsibility for the project at a client-healthcare level.

(From the [EIT evaluation report](#))

Process

GP practices invited eligible patients (patients with COPD, unstable asthma respiratory presentation to Emergency Department within the last 12 months or long-term smokers) to enrol on the pilot programme. The programme allows free access to spirometry, plus three free follow up visits (no time frame for these).

Benefits and outcomes

The project has now become business as usual across the PHO.

Over the course of the first year, referrals and unplanned admissions to secondary services dropped from 658 to 28.

What worked

- Agreed and protected time for nurses to provide education to patients.
- Respiratory Nurse Specialist provided structured training and ongoing mentoring to the primary care teams, particularly nurses.
- Clear integrated pathway across primary, secondary, tertiary and NGOs/community services.
- Respiratory nurse champion at each general practice.
- Free primary care nurse appointments for referred patients.
- Tick list available as an advance form in Medtech.

Staff quotes

“This is certainly breaking down a huge barrier of access to health care, and a number of patients have commented that previously they could not afford to come to the doctor when they first started becoming unwell.”

“By far the success has to be measured by how the patients perceive this type of service, and from the feedback already received, we are on to a winning formula. With the patient in the centre taking ownership of their health needs, and supporting services coming together to share what they can to enable this outcome, we will see a significant improvement in management and quality of life in patients with respiratory conditions.”

“There is an increased confidence in all health workers (doctors and nurses) with the management of respiratory conditions. Empowerment is not only for patients but staff as well. Improved pharmacology is already being seen – right medicine, right dose, right place (technique), right time. Both patient and clinical staff are contributing to this.”

“What we are hoping to see is fewer exacerbations and enhanced quality of life for patients who effectively take control of their health prevention by management. If the patient feels better, they manage better. Already patients have benefited from this intensive form of intervention.”

Patient quote

“You spent time with me, you listened to me, and helped me understand my lung condition, my inhalers and their use, just the right way to do things so it means I can control what happens to me. I did not realise that if I didn’t take control, my lungs could get very bad. I didn’t think my inhalers were working, so I thought I didn’t need to take them. Now I understand and am using them right, my health “has never been better”. Because it would cost me money to come to the doctor, I would wait to see if I could get better by myself, and then when I did go, I was usually very sick. You showed me the right way to breathe and how to try and cough up my sputum. Initially I used to cover the bottom of a 2 litre ice-cream container with sputum but now there is hardly any”.

References

[The Evaluation of Respiratory Nurse-led Clinics: Health Hawke’s Bay 2015](#) Eastern Institute of Technology

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