

MEDIA RELEASE

New telehealth training for aged care

15 August 2024

Accessing healthcare in rural areas can often be challenging due to workforce shortages and distances to travel, but telehealth – the ability to consult with a healthcare provider by phone or video – can help bridge the gap.

Staff who work in, or provide services to, Commonwealth-funded residential aged care homes, can now access a new training package to learn how to deliver safe and effective telehealth services.

Developed by a group of 15 Primary Health Networks (PHNs) from across Australia, the free telehealth training package aims to upskill professionals. Importantly, it can help to keep unwell and frail residents from having to leave their homes when they don't need in-person care at a GP practice or in hospital.

The package offers 62, six-minute long modules, designed to fit into busy days and revisited at any time. Each module aligns to best-practice and accessibility principles, with plain language and closed captions, and is accompanied by checklists and resources. The modules are also accredited for educational hours for GPs and nurses.

Learning topics start with the basics of choosing the right location and device, managing privacy and confidentiality, to more intricate and practical considerations such as how to best support people during end of life care and technology troubleshooting tips.

Murray PHN CEO Matt Jones said that while telehealth had been around for some time, it was only during COVID that its benefits were fully realised.

“The combination of telehealth with face-to-face primary care when necessary, has been a welcome addition across our region.

“Difficulty in recruiting health practitioners to rural areas, including in the after hours period, means that telehealth can improve real-time access to care.”

Last year, Murray PHN provided grants to 75 aged care homes in its region to help them purchase or update IT equipment and hardware. Mr Jones said this was the first step in supporting the sector and was based on recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

“The Commission noted the benefits of increasing the capacity and capability of the sector to access virtual primary care services, in order to protect frail older people from the potential harm and distress caused by travel.

“With no long trips to hospitals or extended waiting times at an emergency department, telehealth models of care can also help to ease the burden on our already stretched rural health system”, Mr Jones said.

To learn more and access the new telehealth training package, go to <http://www.resiagedcaretelehealth.training>

The fifteen PHNs involved in the project are: Western Victoria, Gippsland, Murray, South Eastern Melbourne, Eastern Melbourne, North Western Melbourne, Tasmania, Coordinare (NSW), Western

NSW, Murrumbidgee, Healthy North Coast (NSW), Gold Coast, Brisbane North, Northern QLD and Darling Downs West Moreton.

The telehealth training is the second dedicated education package released for the sector this year. BERTIE – Better lives for residents through innovative education – is a free 20 module package developed by Murray PHN on behalf of Victoria’s six PHNs that covers health topics such as pain assessment, communication, advanced care planning, assessing deterioration, movement and mobility. To learn more about BERTIE visit: <https://murrayphn.org.au/>

About us:

Murray PHN is one of 31 PHNs (Primary Health Networks) around Australia working to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of primary health care and service systems. Across our region, we work with general practitioners (GPs), community health, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), pharmacy, aged care and allied health practitioners, and with acute services such as hospitals, specialists and emergency care.

The role of PHNs is to help to support and integrate the work of these important services to ensure that the people get the right care, in the right place, at the right time. In the Murray PHN region, which covers almost 100,000 sq km of regional Victoria, we work to develop and maintain sustainable models of primary health care for our communities.

Contact details

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Images of Matt Jones

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