



Clever Health Update July 08

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Telemedicine in Emergency Departments

The use of telemedicine in emergency departments (EDs) is most effective for moderate trauma patients, according to a research paper published in the latest issue of the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

Professor Johanna Westbrook, from the Health Informatics Research and Evaluation Unit at the University of Sydney, and her co-authors evaluated whether the introduction of an emergency department telemedicine system changed patient management and outcome indicators. The study looked at the use of the Virtual Critical Care Unit (VICCU), a telemedicine system that allows real-time, broadcast-quality, low-latency audiovisual communications between ED clinicians at different sites.

The study was conducted in the EDs of an 85-bed district hospital and a 420-bed metropolitan tertiary hospital – for one year before and 18 months after the introduction of the VICCU.

At the end of the study, doctor and nurse clinicians were interviewed on their perceptions of how the VICCU system impacted on the care provided and their work.

While technological advances have provided new opportunities for the use of telemedicine systems, particularly in time-critical settings such as emergency departments, telemedicine interventions are rarely subjected to the same level of scrutiny as other health interventions, according to the authors. "More concerning is the increasing investment in telemedicine in the absence of robust data on efficacy or effectiveness."

In the study by Professor Westbrook and colleagues, the VICCU appeared most effective for moderate trauma patients. For these patients, discharges increased significantly (45% to 63%), transfers decreased (48% to 25%), and treatment times increased.

For critical care patients, admissions fell (54% to 30%), transfers increased (21% to 39%), and more procedures were performed.

For major trauma patients, treatment times and the proportion of admissions, discharges and transfers did not change significantly after introduction of the VICCU.

Clinicians reported that the VICCU allowed greater support to clinicians at the district hospital, while specialists at the large metropolitan hospital said their workloads had increased and that they felt a greater responsibility for patients at the district hospital, according to the authors.

At the district hospital, nurses reported reduced stress, but doctors reported some loss of autonomy.

The researchers are now calling for large-scale trials of telemedicine systems that include measurements of patient care and the impact on clinicians' work.

The *Medical Journal of Australia* is a publication of the Australian Medical Association.

Supplied by MJA and AMA

My thanks to Pat Standen Grampians Regional Trauma, Emergency and Critical Care Coordinator for sending me this abstract

Change Management Workshop

July 31st and August 1st Old Colonial Motor Inn Halls Gap

This workshop has been developed to support the integration of the Interns in to the current practice for the health services. Staff from each health service have been nominated to attend and I look forward to profiling the projects to be developed for each health service.

The workshop is designed to develop "champions" within the Health field to utilise and engage with co-workers to promote the benefits of the new technology. The workshop will encourage participants to engage with their peers in identifying applications and functions which can be implemented, to ensure the technology is fully utilised.

Participants will engage in activities focusing on change and innovation, will be implemented through a combination of theory and action learning behaviours through the 1.5 day program.

Evaluation of Videoconferencing – we are seeking your opinion of the videoconferencing network and your experience of using it as part of our drive to improve the service offered by GRHANet and the Clever Health project to the health services in the region.

All you need to do is click on the link listed below and it will take you to a short web based survey.

http://www.cric.com.au/cb_pages/vcsurvey.php

Thank you

Primary Mental Health case conferencing—next session by videoconference on Tuesday August 5th 10.30—1200pm

The Australasian Telehealth Society (ATHS)

The Australasian Telehealth Society (ATHS) was formed early in 2008 and is now calling for members. ATHS will be a forum for the telehealth community in Australia and New Zealand, who have not previously had such a common meeting ground, or a voice in decision making in health care. The Foundation President of the Society is Prof Kanagasalingam Yogesan, Director of the Centre for eHealth at the Lions Eye Institute in Perth WA, and a foundation committee has been formed to take the new Society through its formation stages.

The Society will only be as strong as its membership, so if you would like a voice in the advancement of Telehealth in Australia and New Zealand, we urge you to visit our web site www.aths.org.au and become a member.

Geordie Hevern from Integrated Vision has been in the region installing the Interns to:
East Grampians Health Service
West Wimmera Health Service
Edenhope Memorial Hospital
Djerriwarrh and
East Wimmera Health Service.
Now we can really get moving with the project

VC Usage by Health Service
July 2007 June 2008

