

MEDIA RELEASE

October 13, 2014

Telehealth conference shines spotlight on future of rural health care

More opportunities for patients to receive specialist healthcare without leaving their rural home community will be explored at rural and remote telehealth conference this week. (16-17 October 2014)

Delegates will hear how the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service (DDHHS) is leading the state in telehealth services, saving patients travelling more than 66,000km to see health specialists last financial year.

Instead, patients were linked via video-conferencing facilities from their local hospital, aged care facility or GP practice to a specialist health clinician to receive timely advice.

In 2013-14 this included more than 800 antenatal consultations, 570 preadmission/anaesthetics reviews before surgery, and a similar number of orthopaedic sessions.

DDHHS General Manager Rural Mr Michael Bishop said the video consultations, often with a local healthcare professional in the room with the patient, had saved around 800 nights away from home.

“The logistics of travelling away from home communities can be difficult as the patient may need to organise child minding, transport, accommodation and time away from work and family,” Mr Bishop said.

“Our local experience that telehealth is well supported and liked by patients and clinicians alike is borne out by overseas examples.

“We are excited that Dr Rob Williams will be the conference’s first keynote speaker and will address the attendees from Ontario, Canada via video link.

“Dr Williams is the Chief Medical Officer for the Ontario Telemedicine Network and is renowned across the world for his leadership and advocacy of telehealth.”

Mr Bishop said the conference would not only highlight industry best practice but also look at the future of telehealth technologies, with a focus on the practicalities of setting up telehealth services.

“The conference is aimed at sharing innovations, identifying opportunities to integrate telehealth in public and private health systems, developing strategies to improve services and creating sustainable business practices across the health sector,” he said.

“The conference is an opportunity for us to show what we do well and for others to learn from our systems and successes.”

The DDHHS is hosting the National Rural and Remote Telehealth Conference at Toowoomba's Empire Theatre on October 16 and 17.

For more information visit <http://www.rrotelehealth.com>

What is telehealth?

- Telehealth enables patients in rural or remote areas to access specialist advice via video hook ups.
- It also enables health workers in rural or remote to connect, via video, to consult with specialists in larger centres.

Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service – state leader

- The Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service leads the state in the number of telehealth 'occasions of service'.
- Thousands of patients across the DDHHS are now accessing specialist care through telehealth provisions from their local communities. As well as this, specialists based at the Toowoomba Hospital are consulting with patients as far away as Birdsville.
- In 2012/2013 there were 1904 telehealth occasions of service across the DDHHS. In the last financial year, that figure rose by 114 per cent to 4083.
- Telehealth has saved these patients approximately 800 nights away from home and more than 66,000 kilometres in travel.

Ends

PLEASE NOTE: Media representatives are kindly invited to attend the some or all of the presentations over the two days. For program details visit <http://www.rrotelehealth.com>

Contact Senior Media Officer Anthea Gleeson on 0417 795 568 or email anthea.gleeson@health.qld.gov.au to secure an all-access media pass.

MEDIA: Contact Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service Media Team 4699 8052, 0417 795 568 or DDHHS_media@health.qld.gov.au