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Addressing podiatry shortages in Western Victoria

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Background

Why we completed this project

• A goal of the Allied Health Workforce Enhancement Project
• Anecdotal evidence of shortages in Western Victoria
• Supported research that the podiatry workforce was in decline particularly in rural areas
• Links existed between the Universities and agencies within the region but these had scope for improvement
• An opportunity existed
• Burden of Disease
Issues and Challenges

• Current workforce unable to sufficiently meet the needs of the population
• Ageing population
• Reducing workforce
• Resistance to change
• Need to engage Universities in developing rural solutions
Aim

• To increase our understanding of podiatry professionals capacity to service the regional community and develop initiatives that will build on this capacity
• To support the links between Universities and regional agencies
Objectives

- To identify current service requirements and gaps
- To build a picture to influence Government allocation of funds for clinical placement of podiatrists within the region
- To understand the type of service consumers were requiring from podiatrists
- To engage Universities in delivery of clinical placements within the region
Method

Approach
• Mapped current services
• Collaborative
• Desk top analysis
• Literature Review

Data Collection
• Surveys
• Telephone Interview
• Face to Face meetings

Sample
• Survey to every podiatry practice within the region (both private and public)
Principle Findings - Podiatry Professionals

12 participating practices
  • 86% return rate
Mix of private and public practice
  • 58% Private / 42% Public
Mix of full time and part time
  • 55% Full / 45% Part time
Average Hours Worked
  • 43 Hours – Full time (highest 60hrs)
  • 18 Hours – Part time
• Podiatrists are averaging 19.83 patients per day
• 67% of Practices/Agencies currently have vacancies they are unable to fill
• 92% of Podiatrists would offer more services if staff were available
**Principle Findings - The Patients**

- Patients were predominantly seeking podiatry services because of:
  - 92% Diabetic foot problems
  - 75% Orthotic Manufacturing
  - 58% Wound Management and screening
  - 42% Paediatrics
- 75% of practices/agencies had a waiting list
- The average waiting period is 10 weeks
- Patients are averaging 98km to travel to their podiatrist
Principle Findings - The Universities

• The Universities were keen to participate in a program that delivered rural clinical placements to their students
• Universities were currently facing an inability to deliver rural clinical placements due to a lack of preceptors and their available time
• Student numbers supported the rural teaching clinic
• Universities were keen to form a quad-partisan relationship
Implications

Moving towards a sustainable solution

• A strategic plan developed in consultation with stakeholders aimed at improving rural podiatry services in a sustainable manner.
Implications
Outcomes of the Strategic Plan
- Development of a podiatry teaching clinic
Implications

Outcomes of the Strategic Plan

• Teaching clinic with 6 permanent placements and a part-time clinician and academic
• Working Party
• Development of a Hub and spoke teaching clinic
• Formalise relationships with the Universities:
  • Latrobe University - lead University (Victoria)
  • Charles Sturt University (New South Wales)
  • University of South Australia (South Australia)
• Maintain ongoing contact with regional podiatrists
• Run the podiatry foot assistants course within the region with the course subsidised for the first 15 attendees
Conclusion

Moving forward

– We have the plan
– We have the stakeholder support
– The project will be implemented when adequate funding is allocated
– The project will be evaluated on its impact on services and on retention of current podiatrists within the region.
Conclusion

The Investment

• Podiatry Teaching Clinic (GST excl)
  – Infrastructure Investment $170,700
  – Recurrent Costs $120,250 – 1st Year
    $118,000 – Ongoing

• Podiatry Assistants Course
  (15 fully funded positions across the region)
  – $ 36,675
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