

NCAHA NEWS

Your monthly communication from the North Coast Allied Health Association



Inside this edition

Allied Health Strategic Workshops p.2
 SARRAH Summit October 2015 p.3
 Hopping can strengthen hip bones p.4
 Events p.5

Message from the Board

Our Chair and I recently attended the SARRAH (Services for Rural & Remote Allied Health) Summit, which is a major strategic planning and advocacy forum in Canberra. The forum produced some important developments with relevance to Allied Health professionals on the North Coast.

SARRAH’s commitment to achieving equity of health services and improving health outcomes for rural and remote Australians remains firm.

SARRAH’s key areas of focus are:

- Access to Allied Health services
- Integration of health services
- Service Outcomes

We know that Allied Health services can make a major difference to the lives of rural and remote Australians and we are starting to put a cost effectiveness value against this important work. We are confident this approach will start to bear fruit in terms of greater community and political recognition of the need for equitable Allied Health services for all Australians.

The North Coast Allied Health Association is committed to ensuring that the North Coast community has equitable access to the best health services. We will continue to work with SARRAH and other agencies in pursuit of this goal. *(For further details on the SARRAH Summit, refer to page 3.)*

With these lofty goals in mind, I am extremely excited to officially announce, on behalf of the North Coast Allied Health Association, that we will be holding our very own North Coast Allied Health Forum in Coffs Harbour on 5 March 2016. The theme is “Let’s get connected”, so save the date as this event is for you.



Rob Curry,
Director, NCAHA Board

Commonwealth Department of Allied Health Strategic Workshops

by Susan Nancarrow

Are you aware that the Commonwealth Department of Health is working with Allied Health organisations and representatives nationally to develop some cohesive thinking and strategy around Allied Health services in primary care?

This work aims to gain an 'on the ground' understanding of the Allied Health sector so that governments, stakeholders and individual health professionals can develop ways to better use Allied Health professionals within the Australian health system.

In March and April 2015, the Department of Health hosted four workshops entitled 'Strategic thinking of Allied Health services in primary care'. The workshops included Allied Health stakeholder workshops, and one workshop with GP and public health organisations. Follow-up workshop sessions were held in September with the National Allied Health Advisory Committee (NAHAC) and another with Allied Health professionals.

The four initial workshops generated 42 priorities which were categorised into seven subgroups. Not surprisingly, the category that generated the most ideas was funding model changes, with a particular emphasis on the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS). Participants felt that the MBS funding model is dated and should be revised, based on community needs and clinical outcomes.

The most consistent theme across the workshops was to improve communication between health practitioners. Other themes discussed at the workshops included:

- Building the evidence: A need for more data on Allied Health, consolidated and drawn together to be able to assess the effectiveness of Allied Health interventions
- Education: Patients need to be better informed regarding Allied Health profession roles in the health system
- Access: Systems to assist consumers to access Allied Health providers
- Workforce planning: Workforce planning needs to match community

needs, and there is scope to better use the existing workforce, particularly through expanding the scope of practice of Allied Health professionals

- Technology: The health system can better use technology to deliver education, triage patients, share information between practitioners and collect data.

The Department proposes to hold follow-up workshops, however details of these are still being finalised. These are likely to involve discussions around the health workforce, telehealth, local-level data, professional networking and education, and access to My Health Record.

Potential avenues for input into these workshops are through SARRAH and your professional organisation. We will keep you abreast of any new information. We hope that networks like the NCAHA will be able to feed into a nationally relevant strategy for Allied Health.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Portal

Edith Cowan University's Australian Indigenous Health *InfoNet*, in partnership with The Healing Foundation, has launched a healing portal on the Health *InfoNet* website.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing portal will engage users from a range of areas including health, justice, child protection and family violence. At the heart of the portal and Yarning place is the connection with culture, knowledge systems and information sharing.

Visit the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing portal at <http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/related-issues/>.

by Rob Curry

Every second year, SARRAH (Services for Rural & Remote Allied Health) conducts its major strategic planning and advocacy forum in Canberra. This year's event was held from 11-14 October. There were some important developments with relevance for Allied Health professionals on the NSW North Coast.

With around 20 SARRAH Board and Advisory Committee members in attendance, SARRAH was able to re-articulate its strategic vision. The vision remains unchanged: to achieve equity of health services for rural and remote Australians, and to improve rural health outcomes. Some practical dimensions have now been added in terms of what SARRAH can contribute. The key areas of focus will be:

- **Access to Allied Health services.** Allied Health service levels diminish with rurality and remoteness. SARRAH will continue to highlight this service inequity whilst at the same time promoting workforce solutions with key stakeholders at every opportunity. This will include advocacy for further reform to Medicare around evidence-based Allied Health practice, engagement with Primary Health Networks around support for rural Allied Health professionals and meeting service gaps, and promoting flexible and blended funding models (private/public) to get Allied Health professionals into rural communities where viable jobs are not a current possibility.
- **Integration of health services.** The coordination and integration of health services, including Allied Health services, are key challenges for improving current practice and efficacy. SARRAH will continue its work to build supportive networks and services for rural/remote

practitioners, and will also explore rural generalist pathways to support skill and career development and leadership for more effective rural practice. Central to the task of building health leadership will be the promotion of effective multi-disciplinary team work amongst Allied Health professionals, but also with the medical elements of health teams.

- **Service Outcomes.** SARRAH is acutely aware of the need to provide efficient and effective health services, and therefore the need to measure health outcomes and cost effectiveness of services. To this end, SARRAH has recently commissioned a report investigating Allied Health cost effectiveness in addressing three key chronic diseases: osteoarthritis, stroke and diabetes. This review, undertaken by Novartis, has demonstrated significant savings of \$175 million per annum to the overall costs of addressing these priority health conditions where the availability of relevant Allied Health services has been ensured. Intervention from an Allied Health professional can reduce the need for surgical interventions like knee replacements and limb amputations, and can help many stroke sufferers to avoid institutional care. SARRAH will follow up on this project to develop more evidence for rural Allied Health efficacy to make arguments for workforce improvements in the bush.

The SARRAH delegates met with a number of Parliamentarians in Canberra to make our case for better rural Allied Health services. Meetings were held with the following:

- Peter Tucker (Chief of staff to Andrew Wilkie, Independent MP)
- Senator Nick Xenophon (Independent)

- Senator Jacqui Lambie (Independent)
- Senator Zhenwa Wang (Palmer United)
- Catherine King MP (Labor Party – Shadow Minister for Health)
- Stephen Jones MP (Labor Party)
- Senator Zed Seselja (Liberal Party) – Chair of Senate Committee on Community Affairs

The focus of all these meetings was on building rural Allied Health access, integration and outcomes. Some practical issues discussed included:

- engagement with Primary Health Networks on Allied Health support
- the need for models linking Allied Health professionals into NDIS roles in rural communities
- reform of Medicare to support private Allied Health workforce development in rural areas
- flexible and blended funding models for getting Allied Health professionals into rural communities

Over the coming months, SARRAH will build on these new parliamentary relationships to ensure every political opportunity is taken to argue the case for Allied Health. We know Allied Health services can make a major difference to the lives of rural/remote Australians, and we are starting to put a cost effectiveness value against this important work. We are confident this approach will start to bear fruit in terms of greater community and political recognition of the need for equitable Allied Health services for all Australians.



“Let’s Get Connected”

Launch, Seminar and Networking Event for Allied Health Professionals

5 March, 2016

Opal Cove Resort, Coffs Harbour



Tickets

NCAHA Member
\$110

Non-NCAHA member
\$125

Student Enrollment
\$60

Optional Dinner (partners welcome)
\$75

Register by 31 December 2015 and enter the draw to win a night’s accommodation at Opal Cove Resort.

Book tickets at: <http://ow.ly/TpRmQ>

Hopping can strengthen hip bones

Two minutes of hopping each day can strengthen hip bones in older people and reduce the risk of fracture after a fall, scientists have suggested.

A study led by Loughborough University in England showed that bone density in the hopping leg improved after just one year.

Bones thin naturally with age, and localised thinning in the hip is associated with an increased risk of hip fracture.

Researchers said their findings have major implications for the prevention and management of osteoporosis. Increases of up to 7% were identified in the bone mass of some parts of the

outer shell (cortex) and in the density of the layer of spongy bone underneath this. Importantly, there were improvements in the thinnest areas of the bone most at risk of fracture after a fall.

The Hip Hop study involved 34 men, aged between 65 and 80, performing a program of hopping exercises on a randomly assigned exercise leg only.

They were told to avoid any other changes to their physical activity or dietary habits during the year-long trial.

CT scans were then analysed to detect any changes in their bone density and showed clear visual differences between the exercise and control legs.

‘Hip fractures are a major public health concern among older adults, incurring both high economic and social costs,’ Dr Sarah Allison, who conducted the research, said.

‘We know exercise can improve bone strength and so we wanted to test a form of exercise that is both easy and quick for people to achieve in their homes.’

Researchers said it was important to build up any exercise gradually, and to hop with caution as falling could cause a fracture in somebody with weak bones.



Upcoming Events

Click the event titles to learn more.

20 October

Musculoskeletal Collaborative Orientation Webinar

21 October

Asthma Update for Pharmacists, Coffs Harbour

21 October

Musculoskeletal Collaborative Orientation Webinar

22 October

Better Questions Workshop, Coffs Harbour

22 October

Richmond Valley Clinical Society, Lismore

23 October

Mental Health Workplace Support Skills for Practice Managers, Practice Staff, Pharmacists and Pharmacy Staff, Lismore

28 October

Unique challenges for sufferers of family and domestic violence, Coffs Harbour

30 October

Bipolar Disorder: the Essential Psychological Toolkit, Brisbane

31 October

Back to Wet Lab – Advanced Anatomy of the Shoulder Joint, Gold Coast

2-3 November

Enhancing Medical and Therapeutic Engagement with Transgender and Gender Diverse Clients, Coffs Harbour

5 November

Dementia and depression in the elderly: correlations and pharmacological treatments, Port Macquarie

6 November

Pedorthic Bracing and Prefabricated AFO Fitting, Gold Coast

7 November

Menopause Essentials Update, Byron Bay

9-11 November

National Allied Health Conference, Melbourne

9-14 November

Eating Disorders Essentials Course, Brisbane

10-11 November

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, Wauchope

11 November

Smoking Cessation Workshop for GPs and Pharmacists, Coffs Harbour

12 November

Smoking Cessation Workshop for General Practitioners and Pharmacists, Port Macquarie

14 November

Advanced Training in Suicide Prevention, Randwick

16-18 November

Improving Healthcare Convention, Melbourne

17 November

Women and Suicide, Ballina

3 December

The Future of Health is in Your Hands: Research Driving Better Outcomes, Port Macquarie

More Events

Visit www.healthynorthcoast.org.au/events to view the Healthy North Coast Practitioner Events Calendar.

Contact NCAHA

Suite 6, 85 Tamar Street, BALLINA NSW AUSTRALIA 2478

Postal: PO BOX 957, BALLINA NSW AUSTRALIA 2478

Phone: 02 6618 5400

Fax: 02 6618 5499

Email: enquiries@ncaha.org.au