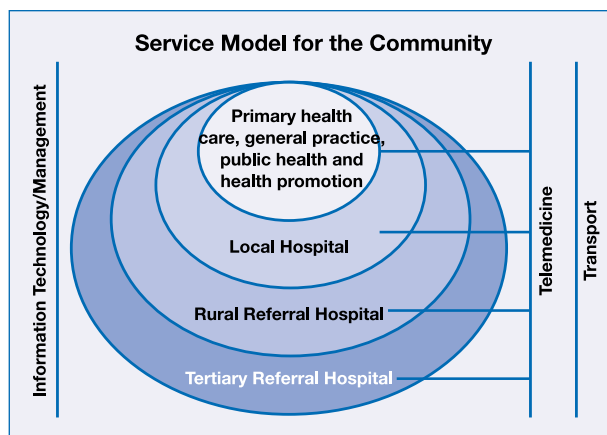


The emerging potential of Telehealth has been recognised by NSW Health and in 1996, the Telehealth Initiative was formed to improve access to health care to all residents of NSW.

NSW Health liaises with clinicians, consumers, carers and health administrators, to ensure that Telehealth services are available where the need is greatest, to enhance existing service delivery. The NSW Government's commitment is \$4 million annually, to continue the expansion of Telemedicine to meet the needs of local communities.

Telemedicine underpins the Health Service Model for a community, linking primary health care, local hospitals, rural referral and tertiary referral hospitals by instantly transporting images, voice and data between points of care.

All Telehealth technology is assessed against performance standards and governed by operational guidelines to ensure clinical efficacy.



"..I don't have to run to the doctors and travel to towns where I don't know my way around for a consultation and follow-up visit."

A consumer perspective

Jack is 67 and lives on the NSW mid north coast. Five years ago he was diagnosed with diabetes. Jack had a 15-year relationship with his local GP, but after developing serious foot ulcers, his GP referred him to the local 'High Risk Foot Clinic'. The clinic is part of the NSW Telehealth Network, which has 12 rural clinics connecting to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital Diabetes Centre in Sydney. Jack, his GP and local health staff, sent images and conferenced with the team at the Sydney Diabetes Centre to formulate a treatment plan that could be administered locally, with the support of the specialist team in Sydney. Jack was able to remain at home, cared for by the people he knew, and importantly, with a positive health outcome.

For further information

If you would like more information about Telehealth contact **The Telehealth Initiative Unit** on **Tel. (02) 9391 9857**

Or visit the **NSW Telehealth Initiative website** at: <http://internal.health.nsw.gov.au> or www.health.nsw.gov.au



NSW
TeleHealth

Information for Health Professionals



NSW HEALTH
Working as a Team

Right now

The NSW Telehealth Network extends to over 160 public health service facilities across NSW. The Network stretches from Tibooburra to Tweed, Broken Hill to Bombala and Coonamble to Camperdown.

Telehealth offers these communities increased availability of services, accessibility to specialist services and relative affordability. For healthcare professionals, Telehealth offers collegiate networking, supervision, peer support and training.

Our plans

Telehealth will continue to support the integration of proven Telemedicine services into mainstream public health care delivery. The Telehealth Initiative will support new Telemedicine trial projects through the annual 'Invitation for Telehealth Submissions'.

Currently Telemedicine services include:

- Paediatric, Adolescent & Adult Mental Health Services
- Diabetes Foot Care
- Sexual Health
- Perinatal HIV Counselling
- Chronic Pain Management
- Oncology
- Radiology
- Rehabilitation
- Haematology

- Emergency Services
- Genetics services
- Surgical Review
- Ophthalmology

Telemedicine provides a means to build and strengthen the collegiate network. Clinicians, no matter where they work in the state, can consult with each other for expert opinion. Rural clinicians can send electronic images to their colleagues for review in consultation via the NSW Telehealth Network.

Clinicians and health professionals have developed clinical and operational guidelines for Telemedicine consultations that directly link patients and specialist clinicians. For example, these protocols stipulate that interactive video links must be established at a minimum of 384kps, a healthcare worker must be present with the patient at all times and the consultation can be terminated at any time by the patient.

Prior to a Telehealth consultation, patients may have many questions about what their Telehealth consultation will be like and it is important that the patient's questions are answered and they know what to expect. The patient should be asked to sign a consent form. Participation in Telehealth consultations is voluntary for both patients and clinicians.

Since 1996, clinicians, consumers, carers, health care planners and administrators, have endorsed the expansion of Telehealth because of its clear benefits.

Collaborative education and training

The NSW Telehealth initiative is committed to collaborative education and training, utilising a variety of multimedia tools such as interactive CD-Rom, internet, web-based applications and video.

Healthcare workers have made a huge commitment to Telehealth, providing access and continuum of care for their patients, by expertly using the technology and changing their work practices. In return, NSW Health is committed to providing ongoing training and support.

Next steps

Telehealth plans to provide options for enhancing access and equity to quality public health services across NSW.

The Department's NSW Telehealth Initiative Unit provides a broad range of expertise, ranging from the development of service models and clinical protocols, to the implementation of technological systems, along with education and training relating to Telehealth.

Advantages for clinicians

“Regular clinical review meetings are now held by interactive video involving all available staff at both ends of the clinical pathway. This process has enabled the services to contribute to the better management of mental health clients.”

- Provides a collegiate network
- Supports and trains, especially in remote areas
- Reduced travel time and costs

Advantages for consumers

“I found the service very convenient. I gained access to something on the spot that would have otherwise been delayed.”

- Earlier and improved access to specialist opinion
- Increased choice and access to second opinion
- Improved discharge planning and reduced readmissions
- Reduced transfers
- Increased contact between patients, their families and local health services

Advantages for Area Health Services

“Telehealth allows us to enhance our existing service networks and is now a basic component of our Area Health Service planning.”

- Reduced inappropriate transfers
- Savings in travel
- Improved effectiveness of health care
- Increased viability of providing services locally
- Increased support for collegiate networking and recruitment and retention