

MULTI-SKILLED, HOLISTIC AGENCY ADOPTS “WELLNESS” PHILOSOPHY

Health & Wellbeing North Ward, QLD

Townsville General Practice Network

CHRONIC DISEASE CHANGE PRINCIPLE 6 *Adopt a multi-skilled, multi-agency approach*

Systemized Chronic Condition Management has become the cornerstone, with the GP Service, Allied Health Providers, Practice Manager, Nurses and Receptionist all having input.

Summary

Having a variety of care providers in the one practice encourages the “wellness” paradigm amongst practitioners, by fostering an attitude of prevention and health promotion as a fundamental cornerstone in primary health care.

By implementing an integrative approach, Health & Wellbeing North Ward has demonstrated respect for patient autonomy and their participation in healing. The focus is always on prevention and health promotion, allowing patients to exercise choice and ownership over their treatment, through the provision of information regarding both mainstream and complementary care.

Background

Health & Wellbeing North Ward, since opening two years ago, have extended their practice to become a multi-skilled and integrated medical practice. The practice still offers primary care as well as working alongside allied other health providers including an Occupational Therapist, Exercise Physiologists, Nutritionists, Naturopaths, Podiatrists, Psychologist and Mental Health Nurses. As a collective, these

services provide care on a physical, social and psychological level, which allows risk factors to be identified and treated before the disease appears and to manage existing conditions.

Process

With a large Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) community, Health & Wellbeing quickly realised that the practice needed a dedicated Indigenous Health Care worker. Employing a specialist allowed the clinic to set up a system for GP Management Plans and Team Care, in order to provide holistic and culturally aware care to the ATSI community. The Indigenous Health care worker runs regular daily clinics to address chronic condition management. Consistent and continuous appointments are made from the local indigenous population and St Patrick’s school, which provides education to indigenous children from around the far north of Queensland. This service is also available and has been extended to home visits, should clients require some due to access and/or language barriers.

Outcomes

Patients have responded very positively towards the extra care accessible to them, and appreciate the diversity of the care available at one convenient location. This is evidenced by a 38% growth in practice numbers in the last two years. By working together, all health providers

are able to provide the best levels of care and achieve the best outcomes for patients. Surveys have been conducted to help improve on patient service and requirements. Feedback from this survey showed a 95% positive reaction to the clinic facilities and provider approval. The care offered by the practice has fostered a sense of loyalty and community amongst patients, with follow up appointments honoured and positive changes in patients, clearly visible.

Looking forward

Ensuring that staff continue to develop their skill set is an important part of Health & Wellbeing's philosophy. As such the Practice Manager/Nurse has increased her skills in diabetes, by holding group education sessions with patients, and she is studying to become a diabetes educator.

Furthermore, Health & Wellbeing is looking to implement an electronic referral for Team Care Arrangement's next year, which will improve patient's attendance with Allied Health Providers. All nursing and medical staff will be trained in the electronic referral system which will allow easy and reliable assessment and provide the allied health team with requirements necessary for Medicare assessment. Nursing staff are now in the process of completing the training package to support Medicare Item 10997, which will allow them to confidently support ongoing care plan and management of their patients.

Conclusion

Through an awareness and understanding of their patients demographic make-up, Health & Wellbeing North Ward have been able to cater to the needs of all patients, up-skill their staff and receive great patient feedback:

"I really enjoy the attention and the one to one service I receive at Health & Wellbeing. Having so many services in the one clinic saves time and stress. I know all the staff and feel at home."

- patient

"The staff are very helpful & friendly and it feels comfortable to me when the receptionist knew who I was after only being here once. It feels as though 'people' are the most important aspect of this practice. Dr Morisco is totally respectful and most positive which is so important for helping people attain maximum good health. All the very best."

- patient

