

## Improving access to hospital in the home: AusHSI launches recommendations paper

The Australian Centre for Health Services Innovation (AusHSI) has identified a number of ways to improve access to quality at-home care with the publication of its report: **Taking Healthcare Home Forum: Overview of findings and recommendations.**

AusHSI hosted the Taking Healthcare Home Forum in February of this year, bringing together over 100 leading clinicians, academics, policy makers, managers and carers in the field. This presented a rare opportunity to connect with health service decision-makers and stakeholders to discuss significant public health policy issues.

Quality healthcare in the home services have been shown to improve outcomes for patients and their carers, as well as reduce costs and increase capacity for inpatient hospitals. Forum participants identified five key needs affecting access to at-home care in Queensland:

- improved financial incentives and funding mechanisms
- increased awareness of healthcare in the home services
- improved professional cultures and attitudes towards healthcare in the home
- improved use of technology
- shifted focus onto the needs of patients and their carers.

Under these broad umbrellas, participants made recommendations that prioritise transparent, streamlined funding processes; specialised training and career incentives; better access to information for patients; improved engagement with technology; and the support of carers in their roles.

The forum addressed the challenges and benefits of facilitating at-home care in the context of three services: hospital in the home (HITH), home dialysis, and home parenteral nutrition (HPN).

AusHSI Academic Director, Professor Nick Graves, commented: "There are significant differences between HITH, home dialysis and HPN. Despite this, the forum identified ways in which government policy, private business and research could work together to enable home healthcare and allow it to thrive. Home health may not be an option for all patients, but when appropriate, it can lead to improved outcomes, lower costs and increase capacity."

The Taking Healthcare Home Forum aimed to identify key barriers to these services, and then facilitate discussion around how to improve the quality and uptake of at-home care. A summary of these recommendations can be found below; however, a full outcomes paper by AusHSI is available on the AusHSI website.

### Taking Healthcare Home Recommendations

#### Funding and incentives

- streamline funding models to facilitate the most appropriate care
- make concise documentation of funding processes and applications available
- create reimbursement pathways for patients
- make transparent data on health system costs available to the public

#### Awareness

- introduce HITH during medical/nursing school and during rotation/orientation
- distribute booklets and refer patients to websites explaining services
- create conversations between doctors and patients around at-home care
- create position for dedicated HITH clinical care nurse

#### Professional culture and attitudes

- recognise HITH nursing as a specialty with training opportunities and career trajectories
- provide clear governance models and role delineation
- standardise protocols and streamline paperwork

#### Technology

- facilitate current underutilised services
- provide and incentivise patient ownership of health records
- invest in integrated, paperless electronic systems
- use decision-support systems for patients on admission
- schedule regular training for new and existing technology

#### Needs of patients and carers

- coordinate services: provide case managers and emphasise role of GPs and pharmacists
- consider needs of carers: provide 24/7 telephone assistance, respite services, and acknowledge financial burden

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