

HIV / AIDS Care

Since 1984, RDNS has been providing care and support to people with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

HIV/AIDS is a blood borne virus. A person with HIV is described as having AIDS if and/or when they develop certain infections or cancers. There are currently over 26,000 people living with HIV in Australia, and over 10,000 living with AIDS. To date there have been over 6,500 HIV/AIDS-related deaths in Australia.

RDNS operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from 20 locations across Greater Melbourne and is also supported by a Customer Service Centre. It incorporates a dedicated HIV/AIDS team, including three expert nurses known as Clinical Nurse Consultants – HIV/AIDS, who provide specialist knowledge and care across all regions of Melbourne. There is also a Clinical Nurse Consultant – specialising in Mental Health/Drug and Alcohol Nursing, two HIV Resource Nurses and an HIV Liaison Nurse.

The HIV team works in partnership with the client, their family, other carers and general nursing staff to ensure the client receives appropriate care at home. Services RDNS provides include:

- Health monitoring and advice
- General nursing care and symptom management
- Medication management
- Complex technical care such as intravenous therapy and pain management
- Emotional support for clients and carers
- Teaching family and carers how to provide any specific care
- Provide clients and their carers with information and advice about other services available
- Education to school groups, volunteers, and carers about Blood Borne Viruses
- Total care of clients whose condition is not responsive to treatment, including attention to the needs of their family and carers
- 24-hour telephone support
- This service is confidential; the nurses can visit in plain clothes and drive unbranded vehicles.

The HIV/AIDS team includes other specialists with dedicated functions. RDNS has Liaison Nurses at most major Melbourne hospitals who provide assessments of clients' needs before leaving hospital. They work closely with the HIV Team in advocating for patients and provide

a vital link for coordinating other services clients may need. Liaison Nurses create smooth transitions for clients between the community and hospital, and vice versa. There is a specialist HIV/AIDS Liaison Nurse based at the Alfred Hospital and Fairfield House.

The HIV Team works with the RDNS Helen McPherson Smith Institute of Community Health Nurse Educators to inform general nurses and community organisations on best practice around HIV/AIDS care and deliver HIV & Hepatitis C courses. RDNS has a unique service agreement with the Victorian AIDS Council (VAC) Community Support Program to provide care for people with HIV/AIDS in their homes. The HIV Team assists training volunteers from the VAC who work with HIV/AIDS positive clients and their families, providing tailored programs for the care of each client.

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