

Prevention better than cure

The RDNS Helen Macpherson Smith Institute of Community Health recently released the results of an extensive pilot study into best practice management of venous leg ulcers.

RDNS' Leg Ulcer Prevention Program (LUPP) aimed at facilitating clients and RDNS nurses working together to promote faster venous leg ulcer healing, as well as reduce the risk of ulcers recurring and further ulcers developing.

It involved using nurses' mobile computers to deliver six automated presentations to help educate clients and their carers about venous disease, as well as provide recommendations on wound dressings, compression bandaging, exercise, nutrition and the use of compression stockings once an ulcer is healed.

Funded by the Sidney Myer Foundation, 185 clients across eight RDNS sites participated in the study from March 2009 to March 2010.

The main results showed that LUPP:

- Had a significant impact on the uptake of four layer compression bandaging, which is known to encourage superior healing of wounds
- Led to measurable improvements in client knowledge and behaviour
- Standardised client education and ensured that participants were provided with recommendations on treatment and health advice based on the best available evidence
- Was valuable in helping nurses provide quality client education, whilst delivering treatment that promoted strategies on improving health and wellbeing
- Delivered a high level of satisfaction to clients and nurses.

The success of the study means it will be available across the whole RDNS network by the end of 2010. Staff training and development will support its implementation.

For more information about the Leg Ulcer Prevention Program, please contact Suzanne Kapp, Clinical Nurse Consultant Wound Management and Research on (03) 9536 5222.



RDNS Industry Forum – your invitation

RDNS will host its first-ever industry forum at Treetops, Melbourne Museum on Wednesday, 17 November 2010.

'Loving Life – positivity in dementia' will explore how those suffering from dementia can live with a significant degree of positivity and contentment. It will also explore where and how the community and health professionals can help to achieve such an outcome.

Guest speaker is Professor John Keady, Professor of Older People's Mental Health Nursing, University of Manchester, UK. The event will also include a panel discussion.

Don't miss out - places are strictly limited to 100 guests on a first-in-first-served basis. Cost is \$25 which includes breakfast and parking.

To download a registration form and find out more visit www.rdns.com.au

**Registrations close
Friday, 5 November 2010.**

Pregnancy Birth & Baby Helpline

In July RDNS began operating the 'Pregnancy, Birth & Baby Helpline' (PBBH) on behalf of the National Health Call Centre Network Ltd.

Funded by the Federal Government, the PBBH provides women, their partners and families with information to support decision making relating to pregnancy, birthing and postnatal care. It also provides referrals for services where required.

Operating 24 hours a day from RDNS' Customer Service Centre, the PBBH is staffed by a team of customer service officers, as well as counsellors such as psychologists and social workers. Much of the information provided to callers is carefully developed by clinical reference groups under the supervision of state health departments.

The new service also provides counselling for pregnancy and postnatal issues; general information about pregnancy and postnatal care (up to 12 months); as well as referral details for local health services.

RDNS' work for the PBBH provides people with an important, safe and trusted avenue to help resolve challenging and personal issues. It's an important continuation of the fundamental care RDNS has provided to so many throughout our 125 year history.



CSC gets thumbs up

After three years since the establishment of our Customer Service Centre (CSC), we felt it timely to rigorously assess our level of customer service. The CSC is RDNS' central point of communication between RDNS and our clients, customers and the general public.

Client referrals, screening and assessments, general calls and enquiries are managed through the CSC, which operates 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

In depth telephone interviews were conducted with almost 300 customers who had contacted the CSC during a nominated period.

In summary, the findings were pleasing, showing that the CSC is achieving a very high level of customer satisfaction (93%) and that only a small percentage of customers were not satisfied.

Satisfaction from health professionals regarding the way in which referrals were handled was at 84% satisfaction, showing us that, whilst feedback from this important segment has improved, we will need to continue to address this aspect of our customer service.



Client's choice announced

In August, we applauded and congratulated Judy Frecker for winning the first-ever 'RDNS Nurse of the Year - Client's Choice Award'.

'RDNS Nurse of the Year - Client's Choice Award' is a newly created award program designed to give RDNS clients the opportunity to acknowledge RDNS nurses who have made a positive impact on their life.

The nomination process invited clients to detail the ways in which their RDNS nurse has enhanced their overall quality of life. With almost 250 nominations received, it was compelling confirmation that RDNS nurses are delivering extraordinary levels of nursing care, encouragement and support each day.

Our winner is a nurse who profoundly and significantly changed the life of her client. Clinical Nurse Consultant, Judy Frecker, was recognised for providing outstanding care to a client suffering from HIV/AIDS.

The client battled her own illness as well as supporting her husband in his fight with the virus until he passed away. It was a time of colossal struggle for the client, who drew on the support and strength of Judy at every turn.

At the same time, the client was responsible for the care of her ailing mother, who had suffered a stroke as well as dementia. Throughout the many health and personal challenges, Judy was a resolute foundation of support, delivering nursing care, advocacy, advice and emotional support. In the words of her client: "...she was, and is, my voice when I don't have one."

After the death of her husband, depression struck our client deeply; again, it was Judy that got her through. "She never once gave up," says the nomination.

Care and support was extended to the client's family and today, as a result of Judy's determination, professionalism and compassion, the client is enjoying a quality of life – both physically and mentally – that she believed had disappeared forever.

These are the sorts of stories at the heart of our amazing organisation, and the reason for this new award.

Congratulations Judy Frecker – a most deserving inaugural winner of the 'RDNS Nurse of the Year - Client's Choice Award'.



RDNS Nurse of the Year 2010 award winner, Judy Frecker.

Loyalty and longevity lauded

Eureka Tower provided a fitting backdrop to honour staff loyalty, dedication and contribution at this year's Staff Long Service Awards.

Ninety-five staff members were presented with their long service badges and commemorative pens by RDNS' Chairman Paul Montgomery for 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, and in one case, 35 years of service.

Prior to the formal presentations, CEO Dan Romanis paid special tribute to the qualities of the long-serving staff members, saying:

"You are the essence of the 125 year-old story that is Royal District Nursing Service. You are the living embodiment of all that RDNS stands for. You are the very reason that people's lives are changed every minute of every day and that communities enjoy a better quality of life and a higher standard of healthcare," he said.

During his address, Mr Romanis also highlighted the ways in which each staff member has contributed to the success of RDNS, as an organisation and as a service.

"It is you who have offered your colleagues knowledge, wisdom and guidance, taking on roles as formal and informal mentors.

"It is you who have shared your vast clinical and professional experience, inspiring and teaching whilst also providing reassurance and expertise to clients, customers and co-workers alike. It is you who have helped the continuing evolution of our organisation – whatever your role," he said.

Guests at the ceremony were also treated to a passionate address from guest speaker Mr Telmo Languiller. Mr Languiller is the Member for Derrimut, has served as a Chief of Staff within the Labor Party as well as on the Law Reform Committee and is currently the Parliamentary Secretary, Human Services.



Mr Telmo Languiller, Parliamentary Secretary, Human Services, paid tribute to long-serving RDNS staff.

Up close with RCNA Chief

Debra Cerasa, Royal College of Nursing Australia's (RCNA) CEO experienced homelessness first-hand recently as she spent a day with nurses from RDNS' Homeless Persons Program (HPP).

The visit, which took place in the latter part of one of Melbourne's coldest winters in recent history, was an important part of strengthening RDNS' partnership with RCNA.

As CEO of Australia's peak professional organisation for nurses, Ms Cerasa was keen to spend the day with RDNS HPP staff and gain a deeper insight into such a critical, yet often unseen form of nursing.

Ms Cerasa spent half her day with RDNS nurse Anne on a visit to a men's respite centre, which shelters approximately 70 displaced men each night, seeing in depth the many social and health issues experienced by men in such a situation.

During the second half of her visit, Ms Cerasa spent some time 'on the streets' with RDNS nurse Kim, searching out homeless people in need of assistance. Ms Cerasa said her day with RDNS' HPP nurses was nothing short of inspiring and made her proud to be part of the nursing profession.

RDNS shares a partnership with RCNA which offers a range of member benefits.

District Nursing Week 2010

District Nursing Week is an annual opportunity to recognise the many district nurses who care for thousands of people in their homes around the clock every day. This year, RDNS' 125 year milestone brought extra cheer during District Nursing Week celebrations in August.

The organisation began in 1885 with just a single nurse visiting the sick poor of Fitzroy on foot. Earliest records show that two nurses provided care to 363 needy citizens in 1889.

Today, RDNS employs around 1,500 staff, operates in three states, as well as New Zealand, and each year provides around 1.7 million nursing visits to 33,000 people across Greater Melbourne alone.

CEO Dan Romanis reminded staff during District Nursing Week that RDNS is a major pillar underpinning the health system, helping people to remain in their homes for longer and giving them increased independence, choice and control in relation to their healthcare.

"RDNS has evolved into a large, dynamic healthcare organisation that continues to deliver health, hope and greater quality of life to almost 9,500 people every single day of the year," he said.

"RDNS' success is based on our ability to move with the times. We must remain committed to ensuring we continue to influence and respond to changes in funding arrangements, as well as government and community needs in order to provide quality care in responsive, timely and effective ways," Mr Romanis said.

"District Nursing Week acknowledges the people that make that happen on the ground: the incredible nurses and staff who remain rock solid in their commitment, professionalism and dedication to local communities," he said in his tribute to staff.



Early Christmas cheer

RDNS received an early visit from Santa's helpers this year, as 12 RACV staff generously donated their time to fold and pack Christmas cards which will be used for fundraising purposes. RDNS has long enjoyed a fruitful relationship with RACV and we were delighted to have their staff's generous assistance.

Staff participated as part of a program introduced by RACV which provides them with one day of paid leave each year to undertake voluntary activities in the community.

Two workshops were arranged where volunteers sorted and packed a massive 30,000 Christmas cards which will go up for sale later this year as part of our fundraising activities.

"The RACV volunteers' effort and support saved us days of work," says RDNS CEO, Dan Romanis. "We are very grateful for their assistance. RACV is to be commended for such a great program."

RACV volunteers will continue to assist RDNS with various activities over the coming year. Our thanks to RACV and their group of volunteers for helping us in such a practical way.

Doctors in the house

In 2010, RDNS was pleased to continue as a partner in Monash University's medical doctors' training program – Community Based Practice Program (CBPP) – by offering second year medical students placement opportunities at RDNS sites.

The CBPP is an integral part of Monash University's Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) curriculum and provides second year students an opportunity to gain experience within a community healthcare organisation caring for people who have diverse needs. The aim is to help medical students develop an inter-professional perspective on the social model of health interventions in the community.

The program offers students an opportunity to understand an individual as a 'whole person', in particular the social and economic context of their health and illness and the relationship between other important factors which impact their health such as medical, cultural, psychological and ethical considerations.

Students also gain an insight into issues around social justice and equity in the delivery of healthcare. With our extensive home nursing service and experience, RDNS is in an ideal position for the medical students to undertake their CBPP placements.

A total of nine students were assigned to RDNS for their placements in 2010. Students attended one day a week for a total of 14 days at RDNS' Box Hill, Heidelberg and Yarra sites throughout their placement.

The CBPP activities of the students at each of the sites were facilitated by an experienced RDNS nurse who assumed the role of field educator, while Client Services Managers and other staff provided support to the students.

The coordination of student placements was managed by the RDNS Helen Macpherson Smith Institute of Community Health. The students were also supported by academic advisors from the university by way of field-visits to the placement areas.

The students expressed a high level of satisfaction with their placements at RDNS. We are pleased to have been involved in this important doctors' training initiative and look forward to working in collaboration with other tertiary institutions and community organisations in their training programs for healthcare professionals.

Looking for the perfect gift?

Stuck for a meaningful gift this Christmas? Purchase an RDNS Gift Card to help those in desperate need this festive season.

When you choose to give an RDNS Gift Card, your donation will help RDNS provide nursing and healthcare to your community's most vulnerable citizens.

For as little as \$20, your gift card can help RDNS purchase much needed food, clothing and medications to support clients of RDNS' Homeless Persons Program. Alternatively, you can choose to purchase a general gift card to help RDNS care for clients in their home.

By giving an RDNS Gift Card, not only will your friends and family be grateful, so will all the clients who receive help from RDNS.

Monies raised from the sale of gift cards directly support the work of RDNS nurses and are fully tax deductible.

To purchase an RDNS Gift Card, visit www.rdns.com.au

For more information on how you can support RDNS' work, please call our Fundraising Office on **(03) 9536 5222** or email fundraising@rdns.com.au



RDNS Gift Cards help our clients in many ways.