Telehealth-key for the future

The year ahead will see RDNS focus its attention on innovation in telehealth, with the organisation keen to capitalise on emerging technology to provide alternative care delivery methods as part of its commitment to help keep people happy, healthy and at home.

As announced by the Victorian Government late last year, RDNS will work in collaboration with the government on its new initiative, the Broadband-Enabled Innovation Program (BEIP). The BEIP comprises 12 individual projects, each receiving a share of around $4 million for the use of broadband in health delivery to improve the lives of Victorians.

The Victorian Minister for Technology, Gordon Rich-Phillips, made the announcement saying that the BEIP will revolutionise access to healthcare in Victoria.

The BEIP initiative has the potential to significantly improve the delivery of medical services in Victoria and means that patients will have access to diagnosis without having to travel to major centres to access specialist healthcare.

The initiative will provide clients in need of specialist medical assistance in areas like dentistry, wound management or oncology services access to high-definition, three-dimensional imaging via broadband.

As a major contributor to the BEIP, RDNS will work on a project which uses a high-speed broadband application, to remotely monitor and guide the medicine intake of elderly clients living independently, via the use of home-based video-conferencing facilities.

RDNS will develop and trial a new model of operation and aims to engage up to 50 Victorian clients and key clinical nurses during the trial and assessment period. We will work in conjunction with Latrobe University during the evaluation and assessment stages of the trial.

For many years, RDNS has been at the forefront of mobile computer technology innovation. RDNS’ CEO, Steve Muggleton, says that RDNS’ contribution to the project represents an important opportunity for the organisation to use innovation and telehealth technology to serve clients’ needs.

“Our aim is to gauge the suitability, appropriateness and limitations of using technology such as video-conferencing to facilitate better medicines management. It has the potential to significantly improve the way we meet client care requirements in the future,” he said.
Cooperating on important research

In 2012, RDNS will start recruiting clients for its first Wound Management Innovation Cooperative Research Centre (WMICRC) funded study. The WMICRC was established in 2010 and will generate more than $100 million (cash and in-kind) over the next eight years provided by the Australian Government and participants to support wound research in Australia.

RDNS is one of 22 participants of the WMICRC which includes several universities, not-for-profit healthcare providers and institutes, and private enterprises. The WMICRC has three research programs: 1) Enabling Technologies, 2) Tools and Therapies, and 3) Clinical Applications. RDNS is a participant in the Clinical Application stream which has a focus on identifying how wound occurrence and recurrence can be prevented, how healing can be expedited, and how scarring can be reduced.

In 2011, funding was received from the WMICRC for RDNS, alongside Queensland University of Technology (project lead), Blue Care (Queensland) and Royal Brisbane Hospital, to develop and validate risk assessment tools for the healing and prevention of venous leg ulcers.

RDNS clients from five sites will be approached to participate in the study. The study will monitor 120 clients with an existing venous leg ulcer for 24 weeks and 66 clients with a healed venous leg ulcer for 52 weeks.

The outcome of the study will be two risk assessment tools that can be used in clinical practice and research across various settings here and internationally. They will identify and shape the intervention for individuals depending upon their risk of delayed healing and recurrence.

RDNS plans to be involved in a number of future wound research studies emerging from the WMICRC that will test the applicability and effectiveness of wound products, diagnostics, and clinical processes, many of which will emerge from the activities of the research programs 1 and 2 of the WMICRC.

Questions about the wound research study can be directed to Research Fellow, Charne Miller ph: 9536 5373 or cmiller@rdns.com.au. More general questions about the involvement of RDNS in the WMICRC can be directed to the RDNS Institute, General Manager, Dr Lisa Donohue ph: 9536 5322 or ldonohue@rdns.com.au.

Nutrition a priority for HIV/AIDS

“...The program is really good and helpful in my life. It allows me to live and afford extra things. The recipes are easy to follow and I’m freezing the leftovers.”

This is the sort of feedback that the RDNS HIV/AIDS team receives from clients who have participated in the Tuckerbag Meals pilot project.

The program is a collaboration between RDNS, the Victorian AIDS Council/Gay Men’s Health Centre (VAC/GMHC), Monash University Community-based Practice Programme, Gay and Lesbian Organisation for Business and Enterprise (GLOBE) and the Ian Potter Foundation, to enhance the quality of life for people living with HIV (PLHIV), to meet their dietary needs and promote healthy eating habits.

RDNS’ HIV/AIDS Clinical Nurse Consultants had observed that some clients make poor dietary choices, and do not prioritise food costs in their finances each week.

Since piloting in 2010 the program has seen many positive effects on clients, including reducing the isolation people feel in the community, improved budget management and an increased sense of self-worth.

Following the pilot, additional funding was obtained through the Ian Potter Foundation to continue the Tuckerbag Program for a new group of clients.

The aim was to offer other clients with HIV/AIDS the opportunity to access this service following assessment by the RDNS HIV/AIDS team. Clients receive six fortnightly deliveries of food packed by volunteers from the National Australia Bank, as part of the NAB commitment to community service. The initial deliveries contained staple items such as flour, oil, rice and freezer containers. Fortnightly deliveries include ingredients for two recipes, desserts and breakfast options, and other products such as bread, healthy snacks and fruit and vegetables.

This project has enabled RDNS to work with clients, develop menu plans, improve food security and engage in health promotion. There has been a shift in clients becoming more proactive in making affordable dietary choices and seeing food as a social event, together with enhanced self-esteem and confidence.
Streets to Home

Melbourne Streets to Home (MS2H) began in 2010. It is a partnership between HomeGround Services, The Salvation Army’s Adult and Crisis Services and the RDNS Homeless Persons Program.

MS2H provides housing, support and health interventions targeted at the most vulnerable people sleeping on the streets in inner Melbourne. The program works with those who have been homeless longest, have the most disabling conditions and are least likely to access services. MS2H aims to identify and engage with the most entrenched rough sleepers to find them permanent housing and support to improve health, wellbeing and opportunities.

‘Vulnerability’ refers to those who are most likely to die within five years unless they are housed. The Vulnerability Index survey, is a tool used for identifying and prioritising the street homeless population according to the fragility of their health. It was developed following research done in Boston that identified the health conditions that cause homeless people to be most at risk of dying on the street.

In 2010, MS2H identified the fifty most vulnerable people from a survey conducted during what is known as Registry Week. Workers then began the work of searching and engaging in assertive outreach with this group. From the first 50, MS2H has supported 32 people into permanent housing, 10 more into transitional or temporary housing with the remainder receiving ongoing outreach support.

There have been no tenancy breakdowns to date, showing that ending homelessness for people with complex health problems and a long history of homelessness can be achieved.

Registry Week 2011 was held from 17-21 October. Over the course of three days, 138 people completed the Vulnerability Index survey. The key finding was an increase in the overall level of vulnerability – 64% compared to 51% in 2010. The incidence of mental health issues was the risk factor that increased the most – 69% compared to 52% last year.

The RDNS Homeless Persons Program has been involved with MS2H since its inception, with two nurses currently employed. This innovative and collaborative team approach not only prioritises housing access, but also ensures a holistic primary healthcare response and health assessment for all clients involved. Of the 138 people interviewed in Registry Week 2011, 72% reported a serious medical condition, and 26% had visited an emergency department at least three times in the last three months, which confirms that homeless people have complex health problems.

Using results from both 2010 and 2011 Registry Week, MS2H is now creating a new record of the 50 most vulnerable people. Workers will then begin the process of finding, engaging and supporting each person to make the life changing journey from homelessness and illness to good health and a home.

The RDNS Homeless Persons Program will continue to be a part of MS2H, an inspiring example of how the entrenched social problem of homelessness can be approached in a powerful new way.

Businesses: can you afford the flu?

It may be the middle of summer but before we know it, the cold days and long nights will be back upon us. And with it comes the debilitating effects of influenza – on individuals and on businesses.

Protect your staff and business against the flu – book a staff vaccination program with RDNS and give yourself and your business the protection you need.

Call 1300 33 44 55 for more information or to book a program.
RDNS celebrates its night of stars

RDNS has celebrated the outstanding efforts of staff at the annual Staff Achievement Awards. The awards scheme encourages RDNS staff to celebrate the contribution of their peers across a variety of areas.

Over 450 staff attended the awards evening at the Hilton in Melbourne to recognise exceptional staff efforts in five categories.

CEO Steve Muggleton acknowledged the hard work and dedication of all staff. "Each year, you are collectively responsible for major improvements to the quality of life and independence of many, many thousands of clients and their families."

"These awards continue to affirm the high quality of care that you provide, the inspiring level of compassion that accompanies it and the fierce dedication with which you undertake your daily work," he said.

Bianca Nash from Essendon was announced as the winner of The Graduate Nurse Award, demonstrating during the year that she has developed outstanding skills and confidence to work as an autonomous and highly capable practitioner who pursues best practice.

Ollie Kapranov from Berwick, Julie Martin from Caulfield, and Margaret Sammut from Essendon were announced as winners of the three Client Care Awards, having demonstrated outstanding care and compassion towards RDNS clients, their carers and/or families which promotes, inspires and facilitates compassionate community care.

Michelle Clancy from Rosebud picked up the Beyond the Call of Duty Award for constantly going above the call of duty in providing care to palliative care clients, as well as support to their families and to RDNS staff. Her nomination states a ‘special friend’ to many throughout the RDNS community, whose ‘impact on team morale cannot be underestimated.’

The Leadership Award was presented to Robynn Daley from Essendon for being a constant source of support and assistance for staff in their quest to reach their potential, a ‘true leader’, and an example of excellence.

And the winner of the Star Performer Award was Kylie Elder from Moreland who was central to the success of the Connected Wound Care Project, a major government funded initiative designed to improve the standard of wound care across Victoria via educational material for nurses and clients. Kylie played a lead role in the project, developing key partnerships with the Department of Health, regional wound care consultants and multiple contractors and service providers.

Online museum runs hot

Last year, RDNS opened the doors to our rich 125-year history, launching a unique online museum. ‘RDNS Reflections’ is an interactive online museum showcasing 13 decades, 7 themes and over 500 stories, artefacts and news media items about RDNS.

A visit to the website takes visitors on an engaging and often deeply moving journey with each intriguing decade of RDNS’ history covered. Interviews and anecdotes from former staff and others shed light on the often tireless and challenging working lives of nursing and support staff throughout the years.

Lava Web Creations worked tirelessly with RDNS to develop the website. As a gratifying footnote to the project, ‘RDNS Reflections’ was recently announced the winner of the ‘Best Website’ category in the 2011 Qantm Create Design Awards.

Undoubtedly regarded as one of the most sought after awards in both the creative and digital industries, the award is truly an honour and a great reflection on the fruitful working relationship between Lava and RDNS.

www.rdnsreflections.com.au
Connection is the key

Throughout much of 2011, RDNS worked on a new initiative with the Department of Health designed to assist nurses and their clients across Victoria with the clinical management of wounds.

The project, Connected Wound Care, comprised the development of a number of wound care resources for use by nurses and their clients. The resources, which include nine healthcare guides and a diabetes foot resource kit, are assisting the management of wounds such as leg and diabetic foot ulcers.

Connected Wound Care is part of the Victorian Strengthening Wound Management Project, and was produced with RDNS in a lead role, with the contribution of regional Wound Care Consultants across Victoria. This is the first time that an initiative to standardise wound practice across the State has been funded in this way and represents an important move in raising the level of clinical care statewide.

The benefits of Connected Wound Care for nurses and their clients are:

• Improved wound outcomes for clients across the State via the education of nurses and clients in important areas related to wound care;

• A standardised clinical approach to wound care within the community health arena across the state and the promotion of best practice; and

• Access to literature for clients which promotes the Active Service Model in important issues related to the prevention and management of wounds.

The Connected Wound Care materials were distributed to regional high-care Public Sector Residential Aged Care Services and HACC funded district nursing services in Victoria in the latter part of last year, as well as across RDNS.

Accreditation on the horizon

Accreditation is a review process conducted by an external organisation that confirms that RDNS complies with a set of industry related standards. RDNS uses the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS) accredited model, and has been accredited by ACHS since 1990.

For consumers, accreditation is essentially an issue of trust. People who use health services want and need to have confidence that those services are safe and will provide consistent high quality care. People understand that there are risks associated with using the health system, but they want those risks minimised.

As part of the Evaluation and Quality Improvement Program (EQuIP5) cycle, RDNS had a periodic review in October 2010. The periodic review consists of surveying the mandatory criteria and reviewing progress on the recommendations from the earlier Organisation-Wide Survey. The Accreditation surveyors awarded RDNS five ‘extensive achievements’ for care planning, evaluation of care, health care records, continuous quality improvement system and policies.

RDNS is scheduled for the Victorian and Tasmanian Organisation-Wide Survey in August 2012. A team of ACHS surveyors will verify the self assessment, review performance, interview staff and consumers, review progress on recommendations from the previous survey, provide feedback and award accreditation. The surveyors will visit a number of RDNS sites across Victoria, NSW and Tasmania.

The 2012 Organisation-Wide Survey will be based on EQuIP5. There have been changes to the standards including nutritional needs requirements and medication management, which is now a mandatory criterion. Incident and complaints management criteria are now separate.
Taking a Swing for Charity

RDNS is thrilled to have been selected as the beneficiary of the City of Greater Dandenong Industry Group Golf Day and Charity Auction in 2012.

In its third year, the ‘Take a Swing for Charity’ golf day has raised significant funds for charities within the Greater Dandenong area.

The RDNS Homeless Persons Program (HPP) will be the beneficiary of the event to be held on 20 February. Funds raised will be used to supplement the nursing care provided to homeless clients by providing them with food vouchers/nutritional support, as well as assistance with transport to important health and welfare appointments – all key elements in the road to recovery. Notably, funds will also be used to purchase a much-needed car for the HPP Dandenong service.

The Greater Dandenong area has one of the highest incidences of homelessness in Melbourne, and has been rated number 1 in terms of socio-economic disadvantage of all Victorian municipalities (Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The proceeds raised through this charity event will be a major boost in helping those who are amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised in the community.

Why not join us at the golf day?

Not only will it be a fun day and a great networking opportunity but, in the process, you’ll be helping RDNS care for the homeless by providing some of the basic necessities we take for granted.

Where: Sandhurst Club, 680 Thompsons Rd, Skye
Date: Monday 20 February
Time: 11.30am registration, 12.30pm shot gun start

Sponsorship packages are now available and donation of auction items welcome.

For further information contact: Judith Rees, Manager - Fundraising and Development on (03) 9536 5238 or judith_rees@rdns.com.au

Consumer participation

In 2011, RDNS provided home and community nursing and health care services to over 36,000 clients.

Consumer participation at RDNS means working with our clients and/or carers to achieve their goals of care. We do this by involving our clients in the care planning process and developing expected outcomes together in partnership.

A Consumer Participation Advisory Committee (CPAC) has been actively running since April 2007 and the following are examples of quality improvements that have been made: implementation of the Active Service Model, input into research, a vodcast on YouTube and the translation of 600 RDNS documents with the assistance of clients in the community. RDNS has also created a dedicated resource list on the Intranet for staff to access information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Population and gay, lesbian, bisexual, transvestite and intersex populations to improve the quality of service delivery.

RDNS has a Consumer Relations Coordinator who is dedicated to the management and resolution of complaints and feedback. Clients and carers are kept up-to-date on the progress and outcome of the review of their concern and/or feedback. A letter is sent to appropriate clients/carers who make a complaint or compliment, inviting them to participate on the CPAC or focus groups as required.