RDNS wins New Zealand contract

Royal District Nursing Service (RDNS) has been selected by the Auckland District Health Board (DHB) in New Zealand to provide healthcare to people in their homes. RDNS staff will assess clients’ personal care needs, deliver personal assistance services and provide care management to clients, including working alongside other health professionals.

The new business – Royal District Nursing Service New Zealand – is one of four organisations that successfully tendered to provide this new model of care. The expansion into New Zealand is the first international business opportunity secured by RDNS. As with all the care provided by RDNS, the focus of the New Zealand work will be on supporting clients and their partners or caregivers in their homes. Service provision began on 1st July 2009.

RDNS Chief Executive Officer, Dan Romanis, said the not-for-profit sector has a key role to play in the development of home-based healthcare services in New Zealand. He said that the model of care that RDNS will deliver in New Zealand is strongly aligned with best practice in the provision of home care services.

“The increasing pressures for quality care services for an ageing population, healthcare workforce shortages and a growing prevalence of chronic illness must be met with high quality community and home-based care,” Mr Romanis said. “We are delighted to have earned the confidence of the Auckland DHB to carry out this new model of care in Auckland.”

Mr Romanis said that a New Zealand manager will oversee the operation and that, in due course, RDNS will employ about 100 staff, including carers and support staff. He said RDNS has been established in New Zealand for the last 18 months, taking time to better understand the New Zealand healthcare system, client needs and the special care requirements of the Maori population.

“We are in New Zealand for the long haul and are keen to play an active role in sharing our skills, experience, knowledge and research in this important and growing sector,” he said.
Providing medication support to clients and their carers is a major part of RDNS’ clinical services: 27% of our clients are receiving care for medication support which represents 49% of all the client visits made. Further, the use of medication is one of the most common interventions in healthcare and involves many professionals (doctors, pharmacists and nurses), as well as clients themselves and their carers.

During 2008, RDNS undertook a project to review a number of aspects of the medication management system in order to identify opportunities to further improve our system and ensure that emerging challenges within the current environment are addressed. As a result, SafeMed 09 has been developed – a program designed to implement improvements and changes to medication management at RDNS.

Internally, the objectives of SafeMed 09 include ensuring that all clinical staff at RDNS are informed about each medication management change; to setup a feedback mechanism for clinical staff to encourage regular and open discussion about medication management changes; and to ensure that Client Services Managers are equipped with the information they need to support and promote the medication management changes. Externally, our major focus is to communicate changes in RDNS’ medication management to relevant general practitioners and pharmacists.

Two main projects are currently being implemented. The ‘SafeMed 09 Road Shows’ which explain the medication project overview and share the medication incident prevention strategies to RDNS staff; and the ‘Caution Label’ trial, which commenced in early June at RDNS Diamond Valley. Also in progress are other initiatives including: medication assessment process; RDNS medication chart review; Warfarin management process; Dose Administration Aid (DAA) management process and client medication education.

In the future, the SafeMed 09 project will undertake further activities to enhance medication management, including setting up a Medication Advisory Group and developing new labels for Dose Administration Aids. This is an important project designed to enhance and improve medication management across RDNS.
We recently received the pleasing news that our 2008 Annual Report received the silver award for graphic design in an international awards scheme. For the last 10 years, our annual reports have been designed by the Educational Resource Centre (ERC) at The Royal Children’s Hospital, a multi-media facility, specialising in clinical photography, graphic design, multimedia and web production.

As a member of the American-based HeSCA (Health and Science Communications Association), ERC entered the 2008 RDNS Annual Report into HeSCA’s annual awards program called the Media Festival. The festival is an international forum for health sciences media with the goal of recognising individuals and organisations whose work represents the best in health sciences media production.

Going, going green

In 1885, RDNS began with a single nurse visiting the people of Fitzroy and Collingwood. Her mode of transport: foot power! Each day, this dedicated nurse would literally walk the dirt and cobblestone streets visiting the sick poor.

These days, our 1,000 nurses rely on a fleet of 600 cars to help them deliver professional nursing services to the people of Melbourne. Without these well-recognised white cars, we simply would not be able to deliver the essential nursing services that deliver a better quality of life to many thousands of people each day.

However, we are aware that running a car fleet – albeit fuel-efficient, properly-serviced cars – has some effect on the environment. That’s why we’ve joined forces with the environmental group Greenfleet – to help offset the gas emissions our cars release.

Greenfleet is a charitable organisation dedicated to helping the community and businesses reduce the environmental impact of travel, industry and lifestyle activities by adopting low-carbon alternatives and through off-setting carbon emissions.

Greenfleet does this by investing revenue into education and awareness of how to avoid and reduce greenhouse gas, and by planting native trees to off-set emissions.

We recently took pleasure participating in Greenfleet’s Planting Day at Lysterfield, where our staff planted a number of native trees and learned more about Greenfleet’s good work.

International award for annual report

We recently received the pleasing news that our 2008 Annual Report received the silver award for graphic design in an international awards scheme. For the last 10 years, our annual reports have been designed by the Educational Resource Centre (ERC) at The Royal Children’s Hospital, a multi-media facility, specialising in clinical photography, graphic design, multimedia and web production.

The purpose of the HeSCA Media Festival is to award health communications media demonstrating outstanding media design and production values. Productions entered in the competition are subjected to a demanding peer review using standardised judging criteria. A select number of these entries are presented with prestigious awards at special ceremonies held in conjunction with the HeSCA Annual Meeting. All productions are highlighted in the HeSCA Media Festivals Catalogue, which has become a standard media reference for the health sciences.

We are delighted that, in such a prestigious awards scheme and against many international entries, Jacqui Glenister, who designed the 2008 RDNS Annual Report has been awarded the silver medal. We have long shared a very fruitful relationship with Jacqui and her ERC colleagues and congratulate her on the award.
RDNS and Lort Smith team up

A free emergency boarding service with Lort Smith Animal Hospital (Lort Smith) has commenced for clients who, due to unexpected circumstances, may be temporarily unable to care for their pets.

Within RDNS’ holistic model of care, pets can provide important company and affection for clients who may otherwise live in isolation. We also appreciate the positive impact animals have on our clients’ wellbeing, and the importance of knowing their pets are safe and cared for at all times. Therefore, Lort Smith, subject to availability of boarding space, will now be providing an emergency pet boarding service for up to six weeks for the pets of RDNS clients who are temporarily unable to care for them due to unexpected personal circumstances requiring their absence from home (e.g. through hospitalisation).

Lort Smith is a well-known, not-for-profit organisation located in North Melbourne with a 75 year history of caring for animals. Every year, Lort Smith cares for over 100,000 animals that are lost, abandoned, mistreated, sick or injured.

Upon admission at Lort Smith, pets of RDNS clients will receive a veterinary health check and, if required, be vaccinated, wormed, treated for fleas and groomed. While staying at Lort Smith, each pet will be monitored by a vet and trained staff; be checked and exercised daily; and receive weekly vet checks.

The partnership with Lort Smith is important and greatly valued by RDNS staff and their clients and will ensure that, as well as attending to clients’ medical and nursing needs, we can cater for the needs of their pets – which in turn, positively affects clients’ health – at a time when it is needed most.

Taking a swipe at swine flu

Over the past few months, we all watched as health authorities tackled the onset of swine flu in our community. Whilst it seems now that the strain of H1N1 that entered our shores was not as extreme as first feared, it has claimed lives, and RDNS, like other health authorities and organisations has been on vigilant alert throughout the period of its spread, and remains aware of the threat of swine flu.

As well as maintaining a cautious watch over our clients and staff, RDNS responded to the request of the Department of Human Services (DHS) to assist in the overall government response to the swine flu threat.

Our main responsibilities were to provide DHS with qualified nursing staff to undertake a number of tasks. These included ‘contact tracing’, whereby RDNS staff investigated the contact history of people affected with, or suspected of having contracted swine flu; as well as working with doctors and others to ensure that anti-virals were delivered to those who required them. We also supplied staff to work in the DHS call centre.

The task of managing the swine flu pandemic was a complicated one and required the input, cooperation and expertise of multiple organisations and healthcare professionals. At RDNS, we were pleased that we were able to play a role in addressing what threatened to be a very serious outbreak of an infectious and unpredictable virus, as well as managing to limit the spread of that virus amongst our own staff and client populations.
For a number of years, RDNS has acknowledged the need for flexible learning delivery options to facilitate easier access to education and training applications. The increasing part-time status of our workforce, combined with the changing scope of practice and clients’ care requirements also demands greater capacity for education that is relevant and accessible. Additionally, staff can complete a component of a course through an eLearning program and consolidate that knowledge with face-to-face learning from the education and training service educators. This reduces the time away from the workplace, enabling more efficient use of time and resources with benefits for clients and staff.

In 2008, eLearning was introduced within RDNS to enhance the delivery of education services. Our staff are now able to access eLearning from their mobile computer devices connected to the wireless Next G broadband network. The growing number of programs using eLearning include: our Graduate Year Program; the Registered Nurse Division 2 project; sharps management; rostering; Community Care Aide management of in-dwelling catheters; and cardiopulmonary resuscitation. To date, over 1,000 RDNS staff have completed an online course.

Effective online education is intended to engage and motivate the learner and encourage a continued exchange of relevant and contemporary information and learning that will facilitate knowledge and skill acquisition. eLearning facilitates this opportunity through the implementation of online education that is relevant to person, time, place and pace, and complements existing methods of education delivery.

Delivery of flexible learning and interactive online education, including core clinical competencies such as medication management, wound management, manual handling and infection control are planned in the near future.

eLearning delivers benefits

Royal District Nursing Service has partnered with InfoXchange, successfully integrating their referral and client management systems, enabling nurses at RDNS and service providers using S2S eReferral to exchange secure online referral information.

The integration, which is now available to over 4,500 users of the S2S electronic referral system across Victoria, was launched in April after much hard work from project teams at both RDNS and InfoXchange.

The improved functionality will further enhance the use of S2S electronic referral and allow for timely action and feedback on referrals, increase the efficiencies of both organisations due to less phone calls between service providers and RDNS, and will mean a decrease in faxed referrals.

RDNS’ Martin Wischer, GM/DON South and East Regions, says: “This is an exciting development. We anticipate positive outcomes for service providers and clients alike as this new online system of referral achieves take up over the coming months. It will mean greater efficiencies and ease of referral and most importantly, improved service for those cared for by RDNS.”
New appointments

RDNS has recently welcomed Jan O’Connell to the role of Manager, Education and Training at the RDNS Helen Macpherson Smith Institute of Community Health and David Aberdeen as General Manager, Human Resources.

Jan has an extensive nursing, education and management background. She has worked with families in community settings through midwifery, maternal and child health and in early parenting centres, as well as in state and local government. Prior to her role at RDNS, Jan helped establish the Forensic Nurse Examiner Network across Victoria. She has also taught forensic nursing at Monash University and has a keen interest in competency-based training, research and evidence-based practice.

David Aberdeen has over 20 years human resources experience. In the early stages of his career, he held a position at RDNS South Australia before pursuing career opportunities interstate and later overseas.

David recently returned from the United Kingdom where he held senior management human resource positions, initially at St James Hospital in Dublin and later with the Environment Agency in Wales.

In brief

Health Minister visits

Late April saw the Victorian Minister for Health, Daniel Andrews, visit RDNS’ Customer Service Centre (CSC) in Hartwell. The central point for all RDNS’ referrals and enquiries, Minister Andrews spent the morning learning about the technology employed at the CSC and the integral role it plays in RDNS’ operations. CEO Dan Romanis emphasised the critical importance of leading technology in delivering RDNS services and health services in general, before giving the Minister a detailed tour of the site.

David Aberdeen

Jan O’Connell

The Hon. Daniel Andrews, Victorian Minister for Health

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