

The Diabetes Update

A bi-monthly newsletter introducing new people, projects and progress in the world of diabetes health

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Diabetes Strategy update

The draft diabetes strategy, *Living Well with Diabetes: A draft plan for health services for people with diabetes 2015 to 2020* was sent to the sector for consultation on 2 June 2015. It was sent to a wide range of stakeholders, including consumers, service planners and funders, regulatory boards and non-governmental organisations.

We asked for feedback on the draft strategy, including if stakeholders:

- can see their own work reflected in the plan
- agree with the 'case for change' and the guiding criteria for choosing priorities and actions
- agree with key messages in the plan
- agree with the priorities identified and, if not, what is missing
- agree the right actions are identified, and any possible alternatives
- could prioritise the actions for the coming five years
- have thoughts on how ambitious targets for diabetes should be.

The Ministry will consider all the feedback and incorporate it into the draft strategy. The final strategy will then be launched.

Waikato podiatry service – putting their best foot forward

A ground-breaking service started by Midlands Health Network is improving the lives of hundreds of people with diabetes and helping reduce the number of amputations.

The service, which started in December 2012, enables those at risk of foot disease to be treated for free by specially accredited podiatrists. To date, nearly 2000 people have been treated, which is delivered in partnership with PodiatryNZ.

The aim of the service is the early detection and treatment of foot problems that can lead to lower limb amputations, as well as providing education for people on how to look after their feet and prevent problems in the future. →



Andrew Jones, podiatrist at Waikato Podiatry



Treating more people in the community at an earlier stage reduces demand on secondary services and allows the podiatrists to focus on more complex needs.

The service also helps increase the knowledge and skills of primary care clinicians to undertake foot screening and foot health promotion for people with diabetes.

Midlands Health Network Chief Executive John Macaskill-Smith says the initial results coming from the service are extremely positive.

‘Early intervention from podiatrists can make a major difference to the lives of people living with diabetes, enabling them to remain active and independent.

‘Initial results from the services show a 15 percent drop in amputations, some of the best results from any area in the country.

‘What’s behind those figures is the hundreds of people who have had their quality of life, mobility and overall health improved by getting quicker and more convenient access to these services.

‘As a network, we’re working hard to equip the primary sector with what they need to fully support people with long-term conditions. We’re working with organisations such as PodiatryNZ, redesigning services and shifting to a more patient-centred model, which offers better support in a wider range of settings and helps people manage their conditions better.’

PodiatryNZ chief executive, Jennifer Pelvin, underlined the significant role community podiatry plays in keeping people mobile and out of hospital.

‘Midlands Health Network understands the importance of having a funded programme for people with foot problems, enabling people to access care in the community they live in rather than having to travel away for treatment.’

Andrew Jones, podiatrist at Waikato Podiatry, is one of eight members of PodiatryNZ to which Pinnacle practices can refer patients.

‘Patients with chronic conditions require multiple appointments with different specialists, and it’s difficult to juggle this with other personal commitments,’ he says.

‘It usually requires a day off work if they cannot access a local service. By providing clinics in Tokoroa, Raglan, Thames or Whangamata as well as multiple sites in Hamilton, the service is providing greater flexibility and convenience for patients.’

Self-management workshops

In May and June, the Ministry held three regional workshops on self-management for people with long-term conditions. These workshops were developed following feedback from the sector that regional planning and networking, with a particular focus on self-management, would be well received.

The workshops were held in Auckland, Palmerston North and Christchurch. They featured presentations highlighting some of the areas of excellence for self-management during the morning sessions. Afternoon sessions saw the group split into service planners and funders and clinicians for more targeted sessions.

Initial feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and the Ministry is considering holding similar workshops on other areas of interest over the coming year.

Patient portals making life easier for New Zealanders

Wellington novelist Blair Polly spends his days immersed in murder and mayhem, but when he needs to attend to more routine things, like renewing a prescription for medicine or asking his GP a question, he turns to technology.

He's one of the many patients around New Zealand now able to access their health information via a secure online portal to manage aspects of their own health care and talk to their GPs.

'It's really good,' he says. 'I'm pretty computer literate, so I haven't had any problems, but anyone with average computer skills would be able to use this. If you can navigate around Facebook or Trade Me, you'll be fine with a patient portal.'

Vendors and clinicians have been working together to give patients direct electronic access to their own information, and a number of portals are being rolled out in practices around the country. Patients can log in to these to make appointments, check the list of medicines they're taking, view records and medical alerts. They can renew prescriptions and ask their GP questions electronically.

Blair Polly's GP, Richard Medlicott, offers his patients at Wellington's Island Bay Medical Centre access to their own health information through a portal called ManageMyHealth. He says the portal helps to connect patients and doctors, provides a useful service and saves the practice time (and money) by doing electronically tasks that usually required a phone call.

Blair Polly, who has type 2 diabetes, has been using the portal since July 2009, mostly for repeat prescription requests and to communicate directly with his doctor.

'I can just log on, see all of my medications and tick the ones that need renewing, press "send" and then pick up the script from my doctor's office,' he says. 'If I need to ask my GP a question, I can just send a message instead of having to phone his office, leave a message and wait for him to ring me back. This is a lot easier.'



Wellington writer Blair Polly, who uses a patient portal.





He gets an alert in his email inbox when a new message has been posted on the system. 'I'll click on a tab, and it will open up my lab results, and there might be a comment from the doctor that relates to the results.'

Meanwhile, Auckland GP David Thompson says a secure online patient portal used by his practice is proving a godsend.

'It's easy to use, gives patients a lot more control over their health care, frees our staff from a number of administrative tasks, and we're also seeing some clinical benefits,' he says.

The Torbay Medical Centre began offering an electronic patient portal, ManageMyHealth, two and a half years ago. David Thompson says 250 patients currently use it, and it will be offered to all 10,000 people on the practice's books.

'It's really good. People can make appointments online, request repeat prescriptions, check their lab test results and send us messages.'

He says the practice is noticing improvements in the management of some health conditions.



Thanks for reading. We look forward to keeping you in touch.

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