

Let the Enhanced Primary Care pay for your practice nurse to co-ordinate Health Promotion in your practice.

Description of practice

Dr Rod Trevena is a Principal in a family practice in East Brighton. There are 2.3 EFT GPs and the practice is accredited, computerized and has private billing. Rod has an interest in taking a whole-practice approach to health promotion.

included follow-up with the immunisation register, managing the computerised recall system for pap smears, fluvax etc. Abnormal test results could also be followed up more adequately by the nurse.

Barriers

After discussing some of the implementation issues with the Monash Division of General Practice, Rod recognised that the main barrier was having someone responsible for the co-ordination of health promotion within the practice. The practice manager, receptionists and doctors were too busy, or not interested, not trained or due to staff turnover, there was a lack of continuity for such a position. Important tasks within the practice were being deferred such as immunisation follow-up which not only was not good for patients, but meant the practice was not maximising its PIP payments.



Nurse's role

The practice employed Maggie Stewart who was working for the Royal District Nursing Service. Maggie trained in England and although she had not worked in a general practice, she has an understanding of how valuable the role of the practice nurse is to a practice. Maggie took up the task of Health Assessments for the over 75's under the Enhanced Care Package. She also took responsibility for the tasks outlined above and has also undertaken wound management and other general nursing duties including management of dangerous drugs, infection control, etc. Maggie brought her expertise in care planning which is the next step in Enhanced Primary Care that the practice is about to undertake.

The Decision

The practice decided that they wanted to employ a practice nurse for this role, but as with most general practices the problem of employing a nurse was money. The solution to the problem was the Enhanced Primary Care package. By employing a nurse to do approximately 3 health assessments per fortnight the practice decided it could fund the nurse to implement and co-ordinate important health promotion tasks within the practice. These tasks

Health Promotion Initiatives

Maggie initiated the establishment of a weekly Health Check Clinic where patients are offered blood pressure, BMI and glucose checks for a fee of \$5. A patient preventive questionnaire (based on the RACGP Green Book) is also administered to patients. Through this process, Maggie has identified patients who are overdue for smears, patients with a family history of bowel cancer,

skin spots and provided advice on stress management. A welcome surprise is that the patients have been happy to pay the small fee.

Benefits to the practice

Feedback from patients has been extremely positive as time with the nurse allows more time for patients to discuss their fears and concerns. This in turn allows more time for the doctor to spend with the patient.

Challenges

The challenges for the practice are that space is tight and the nurse's in-tray is getting higher as the practice identifies more tasks that she can undertake on behalf of the practice. It also takes time for the doctors to organise, liaise and plan the role to ensure that it is fully integrated into the practice.

Conclusion

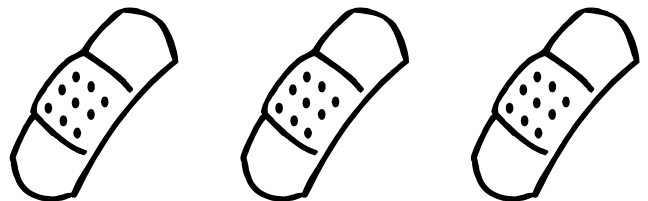
Rod is relieved that there is a person to take responsibility for a whole-practice approach to health promotion and that the feedback from patients and staff is very positive. Rod can already see practice efficiency improvements.

Financial benefits to the practice

Income for the Health Assessments (and shortly from Care Planning) has been generated by the nurse. An increased immunisation rate has meant an increased PIP payment. There is a 70% response rate to pap smear recalls and other recalls have excellent response rates. Follow-up doctor appointments are made following the initiation of the patient preventive questionnaire and there are more follow-up appointments for abnormal results.

The net income for the practice for the first 6 months period is outlined below:

Salary	Income generated by Health Assessments	Other Income generated
\$3545	\$6677	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ↑ Immunisation rate and ↑ PIP payments • 70% response rate to pap smear recall • 100% response rate to Hep A recall • FU appointment with health questionnaire • ↑ FU with appointment for abnormal results
TOTAL PROFIT = \$3134		+++++++



Dr Rod Trevena says that the decision to employ a practice nurse for health promotion using the Enhanced Primary Care funding has been more successful than he imagined. It has worked on all fronts: the doctors, staff and patients have expressed satisfaction, there are obvious financial benefits to the practice and there is now an established health promotion facet to the practice. Working with another health professional within the practice has also brought an added perspective of their work to him and his colleagues.