

MEDIA RELEASE

Implementing a new COPD model of care

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An Australian Government Initiative

A group of passionate local clinicians is helping patients with chronic lung disease remain well enough to stay out of hospital.

The Managing Chronic Disease in Wangaratta and Benalla Reference Group, led by Northeast Health Wangaratta and Murray PHN, is made up of 15 health professionals and one patient advocate.

Tomorrow the reference group will launch their innovative 20-page My Lung Health booklet and patient care flowchart at a special Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) forum to support local doctors, pharmacist and other medical professionals. The group plans to pilot the booklet and flowchart through a representative group drawn from the 4,200 patients affected by COPD in North East Victoria.

Northeast Health Wangaratta's Director Community Health David Kidd, said that the group's efforts have been about building better communication and connections between local services, and working towards improving the patient journey.

"We know that the more informed and supported patients are in managing their own health, the more likely they are to have control over their condition and achieve better health outcomes," he said.

Over the past 16 months, the group has worked to increase awareness of the types of health checks and referrals options open to doctors and health professionals.

Murray PHN Executive Director Integration, Penny Wilkinson said that in a system with finite funding, "We must concentrate on the health issues that have the greatest impact on people in the region."

Despite falling death rates, COPD is still a leading cause of death and disease burden, after heart disease, stroke and cancer.

"Chronic lung disease impacts on both patient quality of life and increased hospital admissions," she said. "This COPD project is an example of how through collaboration between patients, general practice, pharmacy, hospitals and allied services, we can impact avoidable admissions to hospitals and improve health outcomes for patients.

No one part of the health system is going to improve system fragmentation by itself. We know that a stronger system will emerge when we work together."

Murray PHN, an initiative of the Australian Government, has set COPD as one of the four main health priorities for its region, that covers 100,000 sq kilometres of central and northern Victoria. If successful, the COPD project will be rolled out more widely to the estimated 14,000 COPD patients in the Murray PHN region.

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