



Telehealth a proven recipe for success for isolated communities

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Some of the more challenging aspects of delivering rural and remote health care may be disappearing, as evidence continues to grow of the benefits that technological advancements are providing to isolated communities.

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) Annual Scientific Meeting in Darwin today learned of the substantial cost savings and increased patient satisfaction that has occurred in the North West Hospital and Health Service, since they introduced telehealth facilities in 2011.

Dr John North, a RACS Clinical Director presented at the meeting with senior radiographer Danielle Jones, and said the introduction of telehealth facilities had been a game changer for the Fracture Clinic patients in the North West region of Queensland.

“Previously patients in this clinic would have had to travel to other major regional centres or capital cities to access this type of care,” Dr North said.

“Now smaller hospitals and outlying communities in the region are easily accessed from the capital city hospital during this clinic, simply with the press of a button.”

“Cost savings have been calculated and published and have demonstrated savings for the hospital and health service of more than \$1000 for adults and more than \$2000 for children per case.” Dr North said.

According to Dr North telehealth has received overwhelming support from the community, and he hopes this example will act as a guide for future governments and policy-makers.

“Care delivery to patients with fractures of all ages has been very well received. Hospital staff, patients and particularly parents of children with fractures have been very supportive and thankful for a consultant driven service to the region.”

“We are all aware of the challenges facing our health system at the moment, so any example of innovation that substantially increases quality is a real positive for rural and remote communities,” Dr North said.

ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

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ABOUT RACS

RACS is the leading advocate for surgical standards, professionalism and surgical education in Australia and New Zealand. The College is a not-for-profit organisation that represents more than 7000 surgeons and 1300 surgical trainees and International Medical Graduates. RACS also supports healthcare and surgical education in the Asia-Pacific region and is a substantial funder of surgical research. There are nine surgical specialties in Australasia being: Cardiothoracic surgery, General surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopaedic surgery, Otolaryngology Head-and-Neck surgery, Paediatric surgery, Plastic and Reconstructive surgery, Urology and Vascular surgery.

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