

Cecilia Xiao - University of Tasmania

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING TELEHEALTH IN WEST COAST TASMANIA

Xiao C

University of Tasmania, Hobart, TAS

Hobart, Tasmania, Australia

Cardiovascular health is one of the National Health Priority Areas that Australian governments have chosen due to its significant burden of disease (1). A group of second year medical students from University of Tasmania (including the presenter) visited Queenstown, along the West Coast of Tasmania to study how rurality impact accessibility of health services resulting in poorer cardiovascular health of the population. Several members of the community were interviewed to identify existing gaps and potential enablers to improve cardiovascular health outcomes in Queenstown. Telehealth was identified as being underutilized in Queenstown despite its potential to provide early access to specialist' services that may lead to reduced waiting times and greater convenience for patients living in rural and remote areas. For example, Telehealth is recommended as part of home-based cardiac rehabilitation program (2).

A literature review was conducted to explore the challenges in implementation, and factors that undermined success of Telehealth in rural and remote Australia. Main challenges identified pertain to cost, technology, inter-professional conflict, organizational issues, ethical issues and patient issues. In the evaluation of Telehealth services, broader impacts such as local conditions and economies of scale, and cost effectiveness were also considered.

This conference presentation will deliver a summary of the literature review findings and suggest strategies to address challenges related to Telehealth. Drawing from this exercise, the presenter will share her perspectives as a medical student on Health Care and Public Health Program Evaluation, highlighting the role of public health physician in refining public health interventions using information, research and evaluation.

References:

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Cardiovascular Health 2015 [cited 2015 3 June 2015]. Available from: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/cardiovascular-health/>.
2. National Heart Foundation Australia. Recommended Framework for Cardiac Rehabilitation. 2004.