



Community connections improving health

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Gippsland health professionals have embraced an innovative digital platform to improve community health and wellbeing as part of Gippsland Primary Health Network's (Gippsland PHN) Digitally Enabled Social Prescribing project.

'Social prescribing' works by enabling general practitioners, practice nurses and other healthcare professionals to connect people with social, therapeutic and practical support in their area. By using the online platform, Kaleidoscope, health professionals can co-design care plans with patients, supporting patients to own their health and wellbeing goals.

Interested community groups register their details in an online community directory that enables them to receive non-medical referrals complementary to existing clinical treatments by addressing a person's social needs.

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, said the unique program encouraged people to stay connected to their community while helping groups and organisations increase member numbers.

"Evidence suggests that people who are active in and connected to their community are more likely to have better health," she explained. "For community groups and services, this means you can make a real difference in a person's life who is feeling socially isolated with non-medical activities."

Digitally enabled social prescribing has shifted the focus from illness to wellness, according to Bank Place Medical Registered Nurse Ainslie Ernst. The Drouin practice has been using the program as part of its chronic disease management processes.

"We saw the benefits of social prescribing in developing a goals framework with our client; we could follow up on their progress over time and really give the support needed to achieve an outcome," Ms Ernst explained.

Registered Nurse, Emma Ewings, who also works at Bank Place Medical, said some examples of these goals included exercise, like walking a certain amount during the week, and connecting clients with community groups to combat social isolation.

"When a client feels they have more to give but are not sure where to start, we help by giving them information on groups they can join so they can still contribute to society," Ms Ewings said. "It's positive to have an ongoing goal process with our clients so that together, we can help people to achieve a healthier life."

For more information about Social Prescribing visit here <https://gphn.org.au/what-we-do/integrating-the-health-system/digital-health/digital-health-social-prescribing/>

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Caption – Bank Place Medical Diabetic and Care Plan Nurse, Ainslie Ernst.

Gippsland PHN is part of a national network of 31 Primary Health Networks across Australia. Primary Health Networks are predominantly funded by the Australian Government to tackle identified national objectives and priority areas.

Visit: gphn.org.au. For more information, contact Tracy VanderZalm at Gippsland PHN on 0447 491 345.