Real-time remote patient monitoring helps people stay at home

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Every morning, a Gippsland man does a simple check of his vital health signs then inputs the information into his mobile phone. He presses "send" and within no time, this information is being checked by a team at Central Gippsland Health (CGH).

If any change in the man's condition is detected, CGH care coordinators respond. A nurse consultant then liaises with the man's doctor who can intervene and possibly prevent a hospital admission. If the doctor recommends hospital admission, this early detection of deterioration can shorten his length of stay.

This new digital software platform from Gippsland Primary Health Network (Gippsland PHN), called Lifeguard, allows health professionals to monitor their patients in real-time while they remain in the comfort of their own homes.

CGH is one of the first users of the Remote Patient Monitoring technology in Gippsland, implementing it in February this year for patients living with chronic and complex health conditions. It was introduced as part of the CGH Values Based Health Care (VBHC) program.

Project Manager, Linda Hunt, said the objective was to keep people living with a chronic condition well and at home, living their best life and achieving health outcomes that mattered to them.

"We can identify deterioration and provide early support," Ms Hunt said. "If we see changes in their vital signs or symptoms, we can intervene and get them the help they require to hopefully prevent a hospital presentation or admission.

"If an admission is necessary, we liaise with our acute health care team and alert emergency of their admission. This ensures everyone is on the same page."

Lifeguard also enables health professionals to easily monitor the health status of multiple patients at once, including the ability to detect patient deterioration early.

Participants in the program enter data into the remote monitoring app daily, using a template for their chronic disease diagnosis. Care coordinators monitor all patients via the app system and if a participant reports outside their threshold, it triggers an alert on the system.
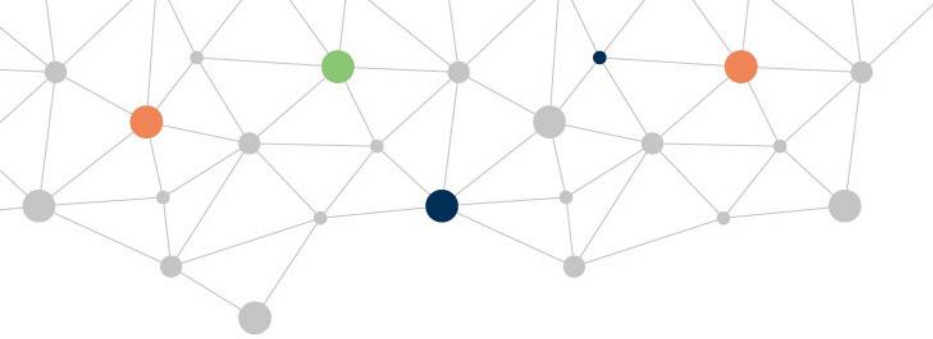
Ms Hunt said if a person had a chronic health condition or cared for someone who did, Lifeguard helped take the worry out of knowing what signs or symptoms were normal. The app can be used by the patient's family member, friend or carer if the patient feels unable to use it.

"We have seen an increase in patient activation of Lifeguard," she said. "Our participants have reported they are able to better monitor their condition by entering in daily data.

"We have found communication with participants via the app to be smooth and easy, with participants finding comfort in the fact that a health care professional is readily available to provide support if required."

Gippsland PHN Chief Executive Officer, Amanda Proposch, said Lifeguard was just one of a range of digital health tools to benefit both patients and health professionals in delivering the right health care at the right time.

Gippsland PHN's vision is for a "measurably healthier Gippsland" and Ms Proposch sees patients' use of technology as a key to people owning and using their health data.

"These collaborative processes and methods between the patient, hospital providers and general practitioners enables seamless patient care and we are thrilled to see how Lifeguard has been life-changing for those CGH patients currently using it," Ms Proposch said.

CGH aims to eventually have thousands of participants enrolled in the program with innovative technology the key to achieving this objective

"With Gippsland PHN as a key partner within our project, we are confident to progress this further," Ms Hunt said.

CGH has now extended the Remote Patient Monitoring Program to Short Term Restorative Care and is exploring other avenues to expand the program.

ENDS
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