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# Changing the landscape of our rural workforce:

Establishing a network of Burns Link Therapists for Country South Australia – the (not so) secret to our success!

## BACKGROUND

Between 2004-2012, the Royal Adelaide Hospital (RAH) Adult Burns Service experienced a 19% increase in regional burn injury referrals, whilst the Women’s & Children’s Hospital (WCH) Burns Service experienced an increase of 60%.

The *State-Wide Rehabilitation Service Plan 2009-2017*<sup>1</sup> included a principle to “Develop state-wide specialised interdisciplinary rehabilitation service teams that work across all care settings for the management of burns”. From this, the “Burns Link Therapist” program evolved.

This program aimed to address outreach services for regional burns patients in a novel yet contemporary way. The program was primarily designed to provide evidence based, burns specific training for Country Health SA therapists (OT or PT). The provision of locally based ongoing specialist therapy, with the aid of telehealth support from burns unit therapists, facilitates early patient referral and timely discharge home.

This is our story of success.

## PROGRAM DELIVERY

The training program is provided free of charge with travel and accommodation support from the Josh Deegan Foundation (JDF), to attend 4 days of face to face training, based at the Royal Adelaide Hospital including:

- ‘pre-training’ online learning and face to face lecture/tutorials
  - 2.5 days clinical placement/work shadowing at the RAH Burns Unit and WCH Burns Service
  - 0.5 days clinical placement/work shadowing at the Hampstead Rehabilitation Centre
- Ongoing support is provided through telehealth, online education, participation in rural education days and JDF financial support to attend the annual burns conference.

## RESULTS

In the first two years of the program, 210 occasions of service (OOS) were provided by Burns Link Therapists, saving approximately 180,000km of travel, and the financial and social burden for patients that is associated with attending appointments at the metropolitan burns services. By the end of 2017, 15 therapists had been trained and a total of 736 OOS had been provided. Burns Link Therapists have demonstrated high levels of confidence and competence in providing the service, through the strong links forged with their metropolitan counterparts and are vital members of the burns team.

## Images of Program



## STAFF Feedback

“ The training enabled me to feel confident at providing high quality therapy to burns patients in the country” – RA

“The most rewarding thing about becoming a RAH Burns Link Therapist is seeing the appreciation of patients when accessing our services, reducing their need to frequently travel long distances.” – MK

## TRAINING DATA

Year	Month Link Tx Training	# CHSA Staff trained	Region	Current total link therapists	TOTAL New Referral	TOTAL OOS New & Review
2012	Jun	2	Whyalla Mt Gambier	2	14	47
2013	April	2	Riverland Pt Lincoln	6	17	85
	July	2	Pt Lincoln Naracoorte			
2014	n/a	n/a	n/a	6	42	85
2015	May	3	Pt Lincoln Mt Gambier	10	26	124
	Nov	2	Naracoorte Pt Pirie			
2016	May	2	Pt Pirie Pt Augusta	14	42	185
	Aug	2	Barossa/Gawler Murray Bridge			
2017	n/a	n/a	n/a	10	48	210

<sup>1</sup> South Australia. Dept. of Health. Statewide Service Strategy Division. Statewide Rehabilitation Service Plan 2009-2017/South Australia, November 2009