

Collaboration in Action: A new model of health service delivery for remote Territorians.

Only 500,000 people live in Australia's most remote locations, but, they have disproportionate access to health services and consequently, poorer health outcomes (<https://www.ruralhealth.org.au/sites/default/files/publications/nrha-remote-health-fs-election2016.pdf>). There are often long waits to access services, and in some cases, people are unable to access the services they need. Our research indicates lack of access, or the perceived lack of access, to adequate telecommunications is still the main barrier to accessing telehealth for many of our regional and remote people (<https://www.cdu.edu.au/newsroom/telehealth-research>). Telehealth may be part of the solution to this long-term problem.

Northern Territory based Simbani Research has joined forces with Synapse Medical Services (Sydney based MedTech healthcare administration company) to develop a technology solution that connects doctors, specialists and nurses to patients in the same way ride sharing companies connect drivers. Synapse Medical's mobile phone application is a medical billing system which facilitates clinicians' billing Medicare from their mobile devices and can also be used to connect primary health care providers, specialists and patients for telehealth appointments.

Nurse Practitioners (NP) are highly qualified Registered Nurses. NPs are educated and authorised to work independently, diagnosing, and treating patients in collaboration with medical practitioners. NPs can provide in person and telehealth consultations, access Medicare rebates, provide prescriptions and access to PBS medicines, order diagnostic tests and refer patients to specialists. National standards ensure NPs provide high quality, patient centred care working in similar roles as GPs.

This technology combined with the NP pathway have evolved to provide access to a wide range of health services for regional and remote people. Additional functionality has been added to the technology for this project so that referrals can be made at the click of a button and administration is reduced. Thus, providing a compliant framework for the project and correct Medicare billing.

This is great news for the 500,000 people that live in Australia's most remote locations as they can now access a wider range of health services through this innovative solution. This new model of service delivery can support our currently under-resourced health services in the NT and improve health outcomes for regional and remote Territorians.

Simbani Researcher, **Marianne St Clair**, added *"we have been working in this area of research for over 10 years and advocating for better telecommunications and access to telehealth for regional and remote people. This project is exciting as it's an opportunity to increase access to health services for remote people and communities. Some of these initial patients have waited over a year to see a specialist or allied health professional. We thank the wide-ranging specialists and Nurse Practitioners already involved in the project and are delighted to now provide increased access to these services for Territorians."*

The entry point to the program is a patient form on the Synapse Medical Services website <https://synapsemedical.com.au/telehealth-for-the-bush/>

Through collaboration, this new model of service delivery may address gaps in health care for regional and remote Territorians, including remote Aboriginal Communities and cattle stations.

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