

SMICS FUNDING PROGRAM

The SMICS funding program provides time limited funding for projects that support improvements in cancer patient care. The focus areas of the program align with the statewide priorities of the Victorian Integrated Cancer Services and the Victorian Cancer Plan. Monash Health has been awarded funding to develop a specialist multimodal speech pathology service for head and neck oncology patients with an altered airway.

Specialist multimodal Speech Pathology service for Head and Neck oncology patients with an altered airway: implementation of a proactive and preventative community-based care via telepractice.

Gaps in the skilled workforce in regional areas and challenges with skill maintenance in areas of low service frequency limit patient access to best practice altered airway management. This results in inequity of access to services for regional consumers who are required to travel to Melbourne to access specialist clinical care.

Monash Health is currently unable to provide community-based care for oncology patients with an altered airway placing pressure on hospital-based clinics and limiting patient access to community based functional and person-centred rehabilitation.

In the absence of a supportive community-based care service, patients commonly have prolonged hospital admissions beyond the point of medical clearance to discharge due to the inability to provide structured high frequency post-acute care during patients' transition home and into community.

This project proposes that admissions to the acute care setting due to the aforementioned altered airway complications can be significantly reduced through increased patient surveillance and early intervention especially for clients who are socially isolated or have significant medical comorbidities that place them at a high risk of complications.

The establishment of a community based management service further aims to deliver

expedited discharges through the delivery of structured post-acute outpatient care and capacity to provide telehealth education telehealth education to family or other support persons to assist in achieving a safe and supported home discharge.

The use of telehealth as a primary model of care allow clinicians to offer practical management in a client's home environment.

Video calls enable clinicians to see and assess the health of a clients altered airway as well as make functional recommendations regarding the home environment to optimise respiratory health and minimise risk.

Telehealth technologies allow for a multimodal communication including chat functions for clients without functional voice in setting of surgical management.

This project commenced on 1 September 2022.

For further information, please email smics.quality@monashhealth.org.au