

2007 NSW Health Awards Entry

Entry Title (50 characters or less)
Eye surgery in Moree- A collaborative process
Abstract (120 Words)
The lack of an ophthalmology service was identified by Moree District Health Service as a priority and a process was begun to introduce ophthalmology surgery to the health service through a unique collaboration with Pius X Aboriginal Coporation, Moree and the Outback Eye Service (Sydney Eye Hospital and Prince of Wales Hospital). With similar goals, the services collaborated to ensure provision of ophthamology services, and in particular cataract surgery, to the community of Moree and surrounding districts. This collaboration has resulted in the commencement of ophthalmology services in Moree in January 2007. Since February, 59 patients have had eye surgery at Moree Health Service, with many more patients having a consultation with an ophthalmologist in Moree during this time period.
Aim (30 Words)
To provide improved access to ophthalmology services to the community of Moree and surrounding districts through a collaborative process.
Nature of the Problem (100 words)
Residents of Moree and the surrounding district had to travel long distances to larger centres such as Tamworth, Armidale, Toowoomba or the Gold Coast to access cataract surgery. A large proportion of the Moree population is Aboriginal (approx.19.5%) and the Indigineous population of Moree have experienced decreased access to ophthalmology services, and in particular cataract surgery.
Extent of the problem (150 words)
<p>Access to ophthalmology services, and especially ophthalmology surgery, has been decreased in the Moree and surrounding district community due to a number of issues.</p> <p>The geographic isolation of the Moree community has ensured people have had to travel long distances to access ophthamology services, and especially cataract surgery. The Indigenous population of the community has been at a distinct disadvantage when trying to access ophthalmology services, especially ophthalmology surgery.</p> <p>Moree District Health Service has not previously provided any ophthalmology surgery to the Moree community. The health service did not have any of the specialist equipment required to perform cataract and other ophthalmic surgery. The lack of an ophthalmology service was identified by the health service as a priority and a process was begun to introduce ophthalmology surgery to the health service.</p> <p>Funding became available through the Rural Surgical Enhancement project in 2006, and all the funding provided to Moree District Health Service was allocated to set up and purchase equipment to begin ophthalmology surgery.</p> <p>Pius X Aboriginal Coporation and the Outback Eye Service were also seeking to improve the eye health of the Indigenous community of Moree, and as the goals of all the service providers were similar in nature, a collaboration was formed between the three organisations with the ultimate goal of improving the eye health of the whole community of Moree and surrounding districts.</p>

Strategic importance (100 words)

The collaboration to realise a full range of ophthalmology services in Moree and at Moree District Health Service relates directly to several goals in the NSW State Health Plan, but particularly to build regional and other partnerships for health.

The collaboration between Moree District Health Service, The Pius X Aboriginal Medical Corporation and the Outback Eye Service has brought together three health care organisations to form a strong partnership that aims to improve the eye health of the community of Moree and surrounding districts. A positive consequence of the formation of this collaborative is the improvement in health outcomes for the Aboriginal communities of Moree and surrounding districts.

Planning and implementing solutions (300 words)

The formation of the collaboration between Pius X Aboriginal Corporation, The Outback Eye Service and Moree District Health Service allowed the project which was initially begun by Moree District Health Service alone, to grow into an exciting and productive relationship between the three organisations. The sharing of information, knowledge, staff and equipment between the three organisations allowed state of the art equipment to be based in Moree to ensure the recruitment of four ophthalmologists to the service, and to provide a high quality ophthalmology service to the community of Moree and surrounding districts.

Anaesthetic services are supplied by three GP Anaesthetists from Moree. The GP Anaesthetists rotate on a regular basis to provide anaesthetics for all visiting ophthalmologists.

Perioperative nursing staff at Moree District Health Service were provided with intensive training to ensure the provision of safe, evidence based nursing care to the patient undergoing eye surgery.

Registered Nursing staff have attended the Sydney Eye Hospital, the Prince of Wales Hospital and Tamworth Hospital to gain skills in ophthalmology surgery. The staff have undertaken a very steep learning curve with no nursing staff having any previous ophthalmology experience. The staff from the Outback Eye Service were instrumental in providing support and education to all the nursing staff. The performance of the perioperative nursing staff has been above the expectations of all involved, including the surgeons.

Management from Moree District Health Service and Pius X Aboriginal Corporation meet regularly to ensure communication about the service and any problems are discussed in a timely and appropriate manner. Contact is maintained between all organisations regularly through various modes of communication.

Outcomes and Evaluation (200 words)

Approximately 110 people from Moree and district were waiting for cataract surgery at Tamworth Hospital in January 2006, with many more people waiting for cataract surgery in Toowoomba and the Gold Coast.

Previously, access to ophthalmology services, and especially ophthalmology surgery, has not been able to be performed within local health services. Residents of Moree and the surrounding district had to travel long distances to larger centres such as Tamworth, Armidale, Toowoomba or the Gold Coast to access cataract surgery.

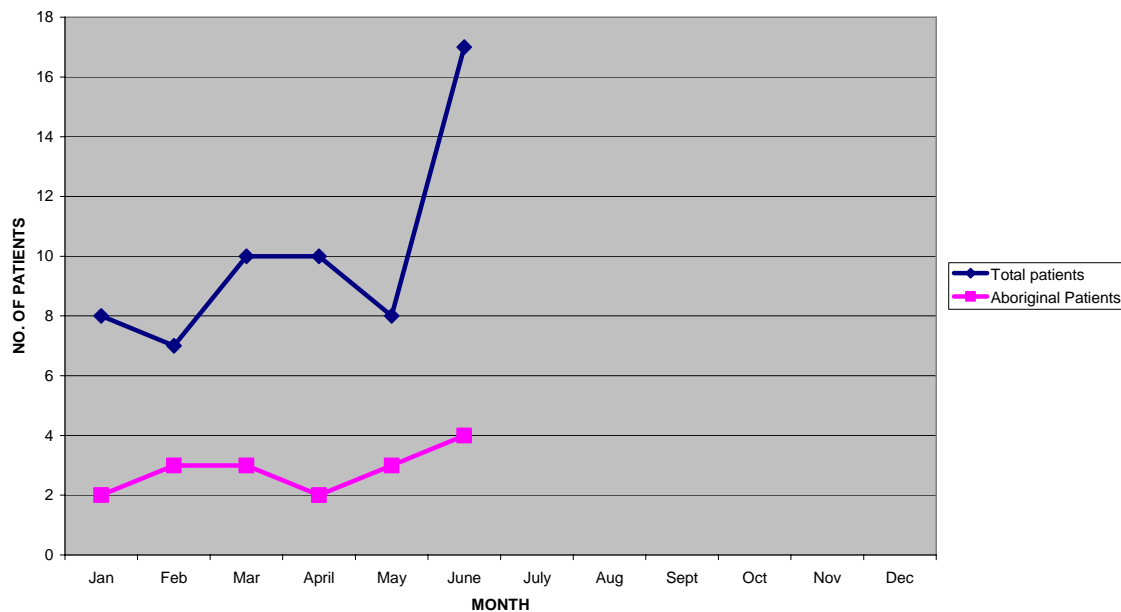
Four ophthalmologists were recruited by the service to provide ophthalmology services including cataract and other ophthalmologic surgery on a monthly, rotational basis. The first operating day was held on 2 February 2007. Since February 2007, 59 patients have had eye surgery undertaken at Moree District Health Service, with many more patients having access to a consultation with an ophthalmologist in Moree during this time period. Surgical lists are fully booked up to, and including, March 2008.

Since 2 February 2007, 59 patients have undergone eye surgery, with the predominant surgery being cataract removal and insertion of intraocular lens. There are currently approximately 90 patients on the Moree Health service waiting list for ophthalmology surgery who previously would have had to travel out of the area to receive surgery and follow up services. This new service has benefitted patients from the Moree community and surrounding districts by enabling the patients to access an

ophthalmology service within their own community, thus decreasing travelling times and the costs associated with this travel, which can be a financial burden on patients.

The introduction of ophthalmology services in Moree will ensure an improvement in the eye health of the both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population of Moree and surrounding districts. 20.3% of surgery in Moree has been performed on Indigenous people, with many more Indigenous people having access to an ophthalmologist (some for the first time) through the eye clinics being held regularly at the Pius X Aboriginal Medical Corporation.

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Sustaining change (100 words)

Moree District Health Service, Pius X Aboriginal Corporation and the Outback Eye Service are committed to sustaining the newly introduced ophthalmology service to the Moree and surrounding communities. Ongoing funding for the service is being provided by Hunter New England Health. The collaboration between the services will be maintained by ensuring communication between the organisations on a regular basis.

Monthly meetings are scheduled to ensure timely and appropriate exchange of information between the service providers. Information shared at the meetings includes numbers of Indigenous and non-Indigenous patients on the waiting list for ophthalmological procedures, equipments issues/needs, service planning and provision needs or problems.

Future Scope (100 words)

The future scope of the collaboration formed between Moree District Health Service, Pius X Aboriginal Corporation, Moree, and the Outback Eye Service is to ensure the continuance of a high quality ophthalmology service to the community of Moree and surrounding districts. The successful collaboration between the three organisations serves as an example to all health services that working together with like-minded organisations can ensure a sustained improvement in the health of the whole community.