



# Newsletter

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## **Network Dates:**

Reference group meeting –  
11/02/2008

## **Newsletter submissions:**

Submissions to be emailed to [sharris@bendigohealth.org.au](mailto:sharris@bendigohealth.org.au)

## **NEWS FROM THE NETWORK**

Welcome to 2008. This edition of the newsletter will focus on Speech Pathology. Articles are included about:

- the Region 3 Speech Pathology group;
- the Regional Communication Service; and
- the Dementia project in hospitals.

Information about the 2008 Loddon Mallee Allied Health Conference is also included. This annual conference provides an opportunity to learn about new innovations in allied health as well as network with other allied health professionals from the Loddon Mallee region.

During a visit to Mildura, Robinvale and Ouyen last year the need for CPD events to be held in the area was highlighted. As a result CPD for allied health and mentoring training have been arranged for Feb and March this year.

The network is currently developing new programs to support Loddon Mallee allied health professionals in 2008. More news on the programs:

- Research Skills for allied health professionals, and
- Support for clinical educators

will be forwarded as planning progresses. If you have any suggestions please contact me.

There are often staff changes at this time of year. Please inform new staff about the Loddon Mallee Allied Health Network. If they wish to be added to the distribution list or would like further information they can contact me or go to [www.alliedhealthnetwork.org.au](http://www.alliedhealthnetwork.org.au).

The next edition of the newsletter, out in April, will focus on Podiatry so please forward relevant podiatry news.

Hope to see you at the conference.

Sally Harris

Coordinator – Loddon Mallee Allied Health Network

T: 5454 9058 (Mon & Wed)

E: [sharris@bendigohealth.org.au](mailto:sharris@bendigohealth.org.au)

## **ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER**

This newsletter is for the use of allied health professionals within the Loddon Mallee region to communicate what is happening within the area. If you wish to contribute or have a suggestion of a topic you would like to see covered please contact me (details above).

### 2008 Loddon Mallee Allied Health Conference INNOVATIONS IN PRACTICE

Our fifth annual conference is to be held in Swan Hill on Friday February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The conference offers:

- Fantastic keynote speakers to speak on clinical education and patient centered-care
- Local speakers on a range of innovative programs that allied health are involved in across the Loddon Mallee region.
- The chance to discuss issues relating to clinical placements
- An opportunity to network with other allied health professionals.

The cost has been reduced this year and an early bird discount is available for registrations received before February 8<sup>th</sup>.

The conference program and registration form are available at [www.alliedhealthnetwork.org.au](http://www.alliedhealthnetwork.org.au)

### REGION 3 SPEECH PATHOLOGY GROUP

Speech Pathologists in the Loddon Mallee region meet together three times a year to network and share resources and knowledge. This group has proven to be a valued forum for all, allowing therapists from locations as far apart as Mildura, Swan Hill and Kyneton to overcome the physical distance and be a part of a large professional group. We are currently facing one of the well-known symptoms of our geography, namely the challenges of travel in particular from our northern regions. The possibilities presented to us by the constantly evolving video-conferencing technologies are being explored in the hope of using this to allow members from all areas of our region to continue to be actively involved in the group.

In 2007, at meetings in Bendigo, Robinvale and Echuca, a wide range of professional development was provided. Most inspiring were the presentations showcasing the innovations of our own members. Ruth Fox demonstrated the Robinvale District Health Services Oral Language Kit. This is a collection of self contained oral language activities designed to be used within the school or pre-school classroom. It was originally developed as a way of improving the oral language skills of children in the Robinvale/Euston area who were unable to access more traditional intervention. It also provides an opportunity to develop the language skills of an entire class, not just the lowest group. Diana Antoniazzi from Catholic Education in Bendigo presented the results of her Master's research into "Oral Language Competence: An examination into Teacher Judgements".

Planning for Region 3 Speech Pathology meetings for 2008 are well underway, with the first meeting to be held in Bendigo on March 31.



Diana Antoniazzi presenting in December

### REGIONAL COMMUNICATION SERVICE

The Regional Communication Service provides an important resource for people living with complex communication needs in the Loddon Mallee region. The service strives to encourage people requiring alternative or augmentative communication support to enter into community life as independently as possible. Innovations such as the "Good Communication is Good Business" initiative at Bendigo Marketplace equipped local businesses with resources and skills to enable them to support customers to shop independently. OPSM has worked with the service to improve access to accurate vision testing for those with communication difficulties.

2007 ended with a number of positive events in the Regional Communication Service.

Due to funding received from DHS we were able to invite Claire Stearne from IDEA (Intellectual Disability Empowerment in Action) in New Zealand who held a training workshop. In particular she shared her training DVD and materials for developing Communication Teams. These are service users in disability day services who would help with facilitating communication.

Training dates were also set in place for a pilot project to train Communication Facilitators in accommodation services.

Kirk, a local participant in the "Out of the Box- Using Technology to Follow your Dream" program gave a wonderful presentation to people in his local community. It was a wonderful day with Melinda Smith, the project manager and a communication aid user, giving input on the background and progress of the Out of the Box initiative.

In December the Palliative Care- Hospice project survey was distributed to approximately 100 staff and volunteers. This survey will provide baseline information about the challenges of communication at the end stage of life. The CommuniKit is almost complete. This is a set of communication aids to assist with communication at the end stage of life. It will be trialed from Feb – March.

Four taxi drivers in Bendigo will also be participating in the Talking Taxis initiative developed with the Victorian Taxi Directorate. They will receive a set of communication boards to assist them to communicate with people who do not use speech or whose speech is difficult to understand.

One of the highlights of the year was our presentation at the ASSID conference. Three Communication Coordinators did their first ever conference presentations with me in a 90 minute workshop. Feedback from the disability support workers who attended the conference stated it had been one of the best conference presentations they had attended.

Finally we have been busy surveying our local community about the Communication Accessible Symbol- we have contributed approximately 200 surveys

Barbara Solarsh

Speech Pathologist

Regional Communication Service

### DEMENTIA PROJECT IN HOSPITALS

Mt Alexander Hospital in Castlemaine has recently accepted an invitation to participate in the Dementia in Hospitals Project. The project is sponsored by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and is supported by the Alzheimer's Association.

During December, Meredith Theobald (Cognitive Clinical Nurse Consultant) and Dr Mark Yates presented the philosophy and findings of the project to Mt Alexander Hospital.

The aim of the project is to improve hospital care for people with cognitive impairment (including dementia) and their carers. The process to achieving this aim involves improving staff awareness and communication through a hospital wide approach to education. A bedside cognitive identifier for cognitive impairment drives the philosophy of client care.

The project encompasses all people with memory and/or thinking difficulties – including dementia, delirium and aphasia.

The project was initiated by Ballarat Health Service, and with the support of DHS was accepted by eight other Victorian Health Services. There was a need identified to provide better care for this population as one third of all hospital patients have some kind of cognitive impairment.

Results from the initial project have shown a significant positive practice and culture change, and importantly, carer satisfaction has improved.

As Speech Pathologists, we were very interested in the project and found it very encouraging to see recommendations in regard to communication that we have been applying for a long time. The project identified nine main points from carers relating to care and communication with their loved ones. These were:

- Introduce yourself
- Make sure you have eye contact at all times
- Remain calm and talk in a matter of fact way
- Involve carers
- Keep sentences short and simple
- Focus on one instruction at a time
- Give time for responses
- Repeat yourself.... Don't assume you have been understood
- Do not give too many choices

The next phase at Mt Alexander Hospital will involve a "train the trainer" model of staff education, resource availability and support given to help get the message across. The Speech Pathology Department anticipate it will be an exciting and busy time enforcing the above points and educating staff about the importance of good communication with people who have a cognitive impairment and their carers.

Clare Walsh  
Speech Pathology  
Mt Alexander Hospital

### FUNDING FOR RURAL ALLIED HEALTH TO PARTICIPATE IN CPD

There have been a number of recent inquiries about funding options for continuing professional development. Two options which are currently available through the Victorian Healthcare Association (VHA) are the "Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for allied health practitioners" and the "Rural allied health postgraduate scholarship" programs.

**Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for allied health practitioners** provides up to \$1,000 per successful applicant to assist rural Victorian allied health practitioners to attend conferences and skill development opportunities. It is available all year round although applications need to be lodged 2 months prior to the event. This fund does not assist with formal tertiary qualifications.

The **Rural allied health postgraduate scholarship program** provides postgraduate scholarships for rural allied health who intend to commence an eligible postgraduate course in 2008. **Applications close on 15 February 2008**

The guidelines and applications forms for each of these programs are available from the VHA website – <http://www.vha.org.au/>

### UPCOMING CPD EVENTS

The "Statewide Allied Health Workforce Education Program" (also known as "CPD for allied health") will again be running a range of CPD events in 2008. The first three sessions are listed below:

Day/Date	Location	Time	Presentation/Workshop
Wednesday 20/02/2008	South West Healthcare, Warrnambool	5pm – 7pm	Reducing the impact of cardiovascular risk factors
Wednesday 12/03/2008	Barwon South West, Geelong	4pm – 5.30pm	Falls Prevention; improving balance by vestibular rehabilitation and attention to footwear
Wednesday 16/04/2008	Leongatha Hospital,	9.30am – 3pm	Autism in Practice: Discussing developmental concerns with parents, understanding family centred practice, sensory integration and managing challenging behaviours in the hospital setting

To register for events or for further information (including presenters & whether videoconferencing is available), go to <http://vic.cpdforalliedhealth.org/>. Past presentations are also available on this website.

### WEBSITE - [www.alliedhealthnetwork.org.au](http://www.alliedhealthnetwork.org.au)

Don't forget the Loddon Mallee Allied Health Network website is updated regularly to include the latest information on CPD events, job vacancies and other allied health topics. Updates for the website are currently planned.

If you would like a job vacancy or upcoming event advertised on the website, please follow the prompts on the website or contact Sally Harris.