

Health ANSWERS awards Quick Wins grant to enhance chronic kidney disease care

Health ANSWERS has awarded a team from Southern NSW Local Health District and the University of Wollongong a *Quick Win* grant to fund a pilot program to help local patients fight the progression of chronic kidney disease, an incurable illness that affects 1 in 10 adults and contributes to 11% of all deaths in Australia.

The clinical trial, *Living Well with Chronic Kidney Disease*, will test a structured, evidence-based model of care for those with mild to moderate kidney disease. It brings together and implements research from around the world that suggests tailored education in groups on diet, exercise, medication management, and personalised health planning can slow the progression of the disease, maintain kidney health and improve quality of life.

“Testing effectiveness of research evidence in the real world will tell us if we can make a meaningful impact on the lives of those with kidney disease. We couldn’t do this without the Health ANSWERS grant,” said principal investigator of the project, Southern NSW Local Health District Clinical Nurse Consultant Pip O'Reilly.

If this research demonstrates that empowering people to manage their own kidney health early can help them stay well longer, reduce unnecessary hospitalisations, and delay the need for dialysis, then we have helped these patients live a better life. Equally important, with chronic kidney disease costing the economy over \$5 billion each year, we will also have a program that can be scaled up across NSW and is likely to reduce the costs of kidney disease to the health system.

The program is built on an intervention that will include five 90-minute group education sessions focused on healthy eating, physical activity, blood pressure and diabetes control, medication management, and personalised health planning. The trial will then compare outcomes for patients receiving the intervention versus those receiving standard care, measuring kidney function, blood pressure, physical strength, dietary changes, and quality of life.

If successful, it can then be rolled out across other renal facilities throughout the region and potentially Australia-wide, bringing it from a research idea to a practical application.

Health ANSWERS Quick Win grants are specifically designed to fund this critical gap — often referred to as the valley of death — between early research and real-world applications in clinical settings, according to Health ANSWERS Director Associate Professor Michelle Moscova.

“Too often, for various reasons, it is difficult for promising research to move beyond the pilot stage” said Health ANSWERS Director Associate Professor Michelle Moscova.

“We designed Quick Wins grants to specifically support projects looking to advance previously successful pilot projects to the next stage of testing. This is because there are very few grants that support these types of projects, especially in rural and regional areas. Rural and regional patients have unique barriers in accessing care, and this study is timely in investigating how new models of care can improve outcomes for patients with chronic kidney disease.”

Health ANSWERS Quick Wins grants have a triple aim: to advance promising pilot projects to the next stage of testing, build collaborations between academics and clinician-researchers, and improve staff capacity to do research across the region.

“The partnership was formed to establish collaborations between health practitioners, hospitals, researchers, and the community,” said Chair of Health ANSWERS Board Ms Margaret Bennett.

“Our intention from day one was to create an ecosystem of expertise through collaborations between health practitioners, hospitals, researchers, and the community across Southern NSW and the ACT to deliver the best health outcomes for our region,” Ms Bennet said.

Health ANSWERS partnership brings together partners from three universities, two health districts, two ambulance services, three primary health networks, a government agency, and consumer organisation across a region that extends across the South-Eastern NSW and ACT.

For media enquiries, please contact SNSWLHD-HealthANSWERS@health.nsw.gov.au