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IN DEPTH

# New approach to digital patient education for integrated care and health care homes

“By empowering people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to better self-manage their health we will help improve health outcomes, prevent complications and reduce avoidable hospitalisations.”

## THE INCREASING BURDEN OF CHRONIC DISEASE

The prevalence of chronic disease is growing so rapidly that health systems worldwide are struggling to cope. In Australia, approximately 85% of the burden of disease and 85% of healthcare costs are attributable to chronic conditions. The recognition of the substantial personal and economic effects of chronic disease is driving the adoption of strategies to address its influence.

The past decade has seen a shift to integrated person-centred healthcare delivery, and the transformation of the patient-practitioner relationship into a collaborative partnership in which patients are supported to take a more active role in their own healthcare.

Integrated Care is a key national strategy to transform the health system to deliver

more person-centred, seamless, efficient and effective care. The establishment of Primary Health Networks and the recent rollout of the Australian Government’s Health Care Homes initiative further demonstrates the government’s commitment to coordinated, flexible care for patients.

At State level, the NSW Integrated Care Strategy is one of three strategic directions in the NSW State Health Plan, highlighting the priority placed on developing new and innovative models of care.

## YOU DON’T KNOW WHAT YOU DON’T KNOW

Health literacy is an important factor in the success of integrated care. Low health literacy has an impact on the quality and safety of healthcare and contributes to higher healthcare costs.

Healthcare providers and organisations have a crucial role to play in addressing health literacy. The National Statement on Health Literacy (2014) details a number of

actions they can take, including ‘provide education programs for consumers aimed at developing health knowledge and skills’.

## USING TECHNOLOGY AS AN ENABLER

In response to the Australian health system’s need to support health literacy, Healthily has developed a patient education web application, GoShare Healthcare, that assists health practitioners to deliver tailored health information directly to patients.

GoShare Healthcare hosts thousands of fact sheets, patient stories (video format), animations, links to credible websites, apps and tools relevant to a broad range of health and wellness topics. Health practitioners—GPs, nurses, allied health professionals, health coaches, care coordinators, pharmacists and others—can send customised bundles of credible health resources via email or SMS directly to their patients or clients.

Health practitioners select the content in the bundles according to the individual



Western Sydney Local Health District and Primary Health Network health professionals, including Care Facilitators and the Rapid Access and Stabilisation Service (RASS) teams, participate in a GoShare training session.

patient's health literacy and information needs. Bundles can be sent on an ad-hoc basis, or automatically delivered as a digital program at a selected frequency.

### COLLABORATION BETWEEN WENTWEST AND WESTERN SYDNEY LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT

To address health literacy and patient education needs in the Western Sydney region, WentWest (Western Sydney Primary Health Network) and Western Sydney Local Health District are collaborating with Healthily to achieve the first region-wide adoption of the GoShare Healthcare program in NSW. A phased rollout commenced in January 2018, with an early focus on general practices taking part in the Health Care Homes trial, and the Rapid Access and Stabilisation Service clinics at Westmead and Blacktown hospitals. A range of services will adopt this digital platform throughout 2018, improving their patient-centred education and achieving better health experiences for consumers.

Walter Kmet, CEO of WentWest said his organisation was looking forward to a strengthened long term partnership with Western Sydney Local Health District, Healthily and health professionals to enhance the health literacy and self-care capabilities of patients, especially those who live with a chronic condition. 'By empowering people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to better self-manage their health we will help improve health outcomes, prevent complications and reduce avoidable hospitalisations', he said.

Danny O'Connor, CEO of Western Sydney Local Health District, said health professionals across the continuum of hospital-based care through to community-based care would be given access to the GoShare platform. Benefits delivered to WSLHD health professionals and patients included improved integrated and patient-centred care.

**SELF-MANAGEMENT IN THE FUTURE**  
Central to disease prevention strategies is

the requirement to change attitudes and behaviours through the provision of timely interventions and credible information, tailored to individual needs.

Early indications from current and potential users of GoShare Healthcare across the aligned Western Sydney Primary Health Network and Western Sydney LHD region are that its patient education and support capabilities can be used in a range of areas other than chronic disease management, including maternity, rehabilitation, allied health and discharge support. Content development and aggregation is already being undertaken with stakeholders in these specialist areas and others, including alcohol and other drugs, mental health, and cultural and social issues—all of which can be contributors to the burden of chronic disease on the health system. <sup>ha</sup>

More information on the GoShare platform is available at [www.healthily.com.au/goshare/](http://www.healthily.com.au/goshare/).