

'Chat to PAT' (Pathways to Assistance and Treatment): The ACT's mobile health outreach clinic for marginalised Canberrans

Authors:

Bronwyn Hendry¹, Ali Loom²

^{1,2} *Directions Health Services*

Presenter's email: Bronwyn.hendry@directionshealth.comAli.loom@directionshealth.com

Background: *PAT* is an innovative mobile health service offering integrated primary health, mental health and AOD treatment and support. *PAT* is operated by Directions Health Services, a specialist AOD organisation delivering programs in ACT and regional NSW.

Chat to PAT, Directions' purpose-built medical vehicle, was commissioned late 2020 to further increase access to comprehensive health care for marginalised Canberrans.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention: *PAT's* free, drop-in mobile outreach service is designed to reach clients with complex health conditions, including AOD and psychosocial needs.

The service comprises a multi-disciplinary team, including GP, nurse, AOD counsellor and psychiatrist, who provide healthcare, harm reduction advice, holistic case management and advocacy. *PAT* operates 7 clinics/week across 6 central locations in ACT. The service has developed strong local partnerships to promote community engagement, including warm referrals to health, community and legal services.

Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation: *PAT* clinics receive strong community support and are well attended by clients who experience difficulties accessing mainstream health services. In the 2022/23 financial year, *PAT* delivered 407 clinics and saw more than 7000 individuals.

The effectiveness of *PAT* has been demonstrated by high client satisfaction rates, significant increase in service demand and client reported improvements in health and wellbeing, evidenced in an external evaluation commissioned by ACT Government and conducted by Australian National University.

Conclusion and Next Steps: *PAT* is reducing inequity in access to healthcare and meeting the needs of the vulnerable target population. Identified challenges include lack of resources to respond to increasing demand for services. There are future opportunities to improve service sustainability and expansion to new outreach locations.

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