

## Link-me trial: integrating a care navigator for patients with complex mental health needs in general practice

### Background

This case study uses the example of a practice located in the Western Metro region of Melbourne. It has seven GPs (five full-time and two part-time), three Nurses and a range of allied health including Physiotherapist, Diabetes Educator and a Psychologist. The Link-me trial commenced by screening all patients aged 18-75, who had a Medicare card and were visiting a practice nurse or GP.

### Identifying and supporting patients who are eligible for care navigation

The trial was effective in identifying several patients who had not yet disclosed their mental health condition to a GP. This resulted in a number of new referrals for the clinic's Psychologist. There were also patients assigned to the Care Navigation arm who had already received a referral from their GP to a Psychologist. Many of these patients were happy to continue with their current care. Others however, had not booked an appointment with the Psychologist, or had visited a few times and stopped going.

As Care Navigation appointments are up to 1 hour, the Navigator had the time to have an in-depth discussion with these patients about the referral and take steps to overcome any barrier to accessing support. These barriers were often financial, or due to symptoms such as anxiety or low motivation. Some patients did not find the Psychologist to be a 'good match' (e.g. they wanted to see someone of another gender, who spoke their own language or who specialised in a particular area such as PTSD). The Care Navigator was then able to invest the time to help the patient find a 'good match'.

In instances where the patient had exhausted the available sessions through the Access to Allied Psychological Services program, or could not afford the gap fee, the Link-me trial organised care package funding to support the patient to access the care they needed.

### Care package funding

The care package funding is available to support the mental health and wellbeing of patients in the care-navigation group of the trial. Some examples of the funding which was authorised for patients at this clinic include: yoga, counselling/psychology, meditation, chiropractic, physiotherapy, exercise physiology, gastroenterology, pain management and psychiatry.

### More information

For more information, please contact:

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We acknowledge the peoples of the Kulin nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which our work in the community takes place. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



