

WESTERN HEALTH LINKS

Helping patients with complex and chronic conditions to stay at home



A new approach by Western Health, with Silver Chain Group.



Western Health

Introducing Western HealthLinks



What is the Western HealthLinks Service?

Western Healthlinks is a pilot program funded by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to improve health outcomes for people living with chronic disease. It is a three-year pilot and aims to reduce unplanned hospital readmissions.

Western Health (WH) is partnering with Silver Chain Group (SCG), a non-profit organisation with a proven track record in delivering in-home health and care services across Australia, to provide this innovative model. Western Healthlinks will commence on 21 November 2016.

Who are Silver Chain Group?

SCG is a not-for-profit organisation delivering community health and aged care services across Australia. They help people of all ages to receive the care they need so they can continue to live independently at home. They focus on individual strengths and abilities and offer support and guidance where needed.

SCG have a proud history of serving Australians for over 110 years in Western Australia and more than 120 years as RDNS in South Australia. They currently deliver services in Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia.

How are Western HealthLinks patients identified?

The DHHS have used an algorithm to identify WH patients who meet certain criteria including patients who:

- Are high users of the Emergency Department
- Have frequent inpatient admissions
- Have multiple co-morbidities.

Patients living in residential aged care facilities are eligible for Western HealthLinks. However, patients receiving palliative care and those who are diagnosed with cancer are ineligible.

Patients who are identified as eligible for Western HealthLink will be given the opportunity to enrol in the service when they are admitted as an acute inpatient, including admissions to the Emergency Observation Unit.

What is the Western HealthLinks model of care?

See the illustration on the page above.

In hospital

- Western HealthLinks patients will be identified within the hospital system and provide their consent to participate.
- An initial care plan will be developed for the patient by SCG in consultation with the patient's regular GP.
- Patients will be risk stratified into high, medium, low risk categories taking into account medical and psychosocial factors. The patient's GP will receive a discharge summary from admission and notification of enrolment into the Western HealthLinks program

In the community (SCG)

- Provision of a 24/7 single point of contact and navigation service staffed by Health Navigators.
- Patients will be assigned a Health Navigator who will coordinate care with all those involved in the patient's care, both in and out of hospital.
- A comprehensive patient care plan will be developed based on the Flinders Model which will be shared with GP
- Specific interventions required in the home or community will be provided by WH Community Services, SCG or other community services
- Ongoing monitoring via phone or home visit
- Real-time patient information will be made available to the patient, their family and GP including care plans, progress, upcoming appointments via a secure online portal.
- **Access to Priority Response Assessment**

Priority Response Assessment (PRA)

The Western HealthLinks service includes a Priority Response Assessment service for all patients. PRA provides an alternative to emergency department attendance, by providing a clinical assessment at home to prevent unplanned admissions to hospital.

Referral to the PRA service can be activated by a patient, carer or health professional by contacting the Western HealthLinks service. The patient is assessed over the phone by an experienced nurse and if clinically indicated, SCG can offer access to a clinical assessment and intervention within four hours of a referral being received, between the hours of 7am – 11pm, seven days per week.

The service is appropriate for patients who:

- Have been assessed as medically stable and not in need of an emergency response and at low risk of rapid deterioration; and
- Are able to wait for up to four hours to be seen by the PRA service

Medical governance for a PRA episode will be provided by the on-call local SCG GP, who will consult with the treating team at WH as required.

Feedback about initiation and outcome of a PRA will be communicated to the patients' regular GP via phone or fax and information will be included in the portal.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the benefits for patients?

- Access to 24/7 phone support post discharge.
- Comprehensive, coordinated follow up care in the community and coordination between their acute and primary care teams.
- Access to their medical information in one place via a secure online portal.
- More days spent at home and reduced unplanned hospital admissions.

How will Western HealthLinks help GPs?

- Involvement in the care planning and discharge planning for your patient while in hospital
- Improved communication and integration with WH about the plan for your patient post discharge.
- Access to a navigation service to access advice and support from WH specialists.
- Identification of patients deteriorating at home so that interventions may be implemented early.
- Access to real-time data on patients' care being provided in and out of hospital via a secure online portal.

How many patients will GPs have?

We estimate that, on average, practices will have around six Western HealthLinks patients per year. For practices that are expected to have more patients, WH and SCG will visit these practices to talk more about the model.

What do GPs need to do if GPs have a Western HealthLinks patient?

Continue to provide care for your patient as usual. Western HealthLinks is designed to assist you to manage these patients and is not looking to replace the vital role of the patient's regular GP.

If you have a Western HealthLinks patient you (or a delegate from the practice) will be invited to contribute to the development of a care plan for your patient whilst in hospital. If the patient is discharged before this occurs, SCG will contact you once the patient is being cared for in the community.

SCG may contact you to arrange an appointment for the patient if they feel that they require a GP review or advice. You are able to contact the Health Navigator too, if you feel your patient requires specialist review or admission.

How do GPs contact the Western HealthLinks service?

You can contact the Western HealthLinks service at any time on 1300 498 641 if you have concerns about your Western HealthLinks patient.

How do patients contact the Western HealthLinks service?

If you are a patient, you can contact the Western HealthLinks service at any time on 1300 498 641.

Key Contacts

Silver Chain Group
1300 498 641
General Practice Integration
8345 1735 or gp@wh.org.au

Email us
HealthLinks@wh.org.au