

Positive Impact submission to Health and Ambulance Service Committee inquiry

Personal Health Promotion Interventions Using Telephone and Web-based Technologies

Executive Summary

The purpose of this submission is to provide the Health and Ambulance Service Committee with evidence of a health promotion intervention that uses telephone and web-based technologies and has demonstrated health outcomes.

Positive Impact is a telephone based healthy lifestyle program delivered by Greater Metro South Brisbane Medicare Local (GMSBML). More than 3000 participants have been referred by their General Practitioner (GP) to the program since 2013. Referrals have been received from over 541 GPs in 77% (224) of GMSBML practices including the South Brisbane metro area, Logan, Redland and Scenic Rim City Council areas. Three percent of our referrals have emanated from outside the GMSBML area without direct promotion.

The program has been specifically designed to target people with risk factors for chronic disease and adopts a behaviour change approach to addressing overweight/obesity, poor nutrition and physical inactivity.

Positive Impact delivering health outcomes for Queensland:

The program has proven success in delivering clinically and statistically significant outcomes including:

- Average weight loss greater than 5%
- Average waist circumference reduction 4.7cm
- Increasing fruit intake by 1 serve daily and vegetable intake by 1.5 serves daily (trending towards meeting Australian Guidelines)
- Increasing physical activity levels by more than 60 minutes per week

Positive Impact is:

- A 6 or 12 month program in collaboration with the participant's GP - adopts a partnership approach
- Modified for high risk cultural groups including Pacific Islander and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Individually tailored interventions delivered through one-to-one phone-calls (18 to 23 calls per person)
- Prevention through to Chronic Disease management including pre-surgical weight loss support
- Evidence-based (utilises established Australian Guidelines and validated assessment tools)

Positive Impact supports the health of Queenslanders:

- Focus is to keep people well and out of hospital, to reduce strain on the public system
- Reduce risk factors for type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), cardiovascular disease, obesity and some cancers
- Obesity is a major contributor to the development of T2DM and weight loss has been shown to reduce the incidence of T2DM
- T2DM can be prevented through sustained weight loss in people who are overweight or obese, adequate physical activity, reduced fat intake and increased fibre intake (PHCRIS Report 2015)

- 
- ✓ Proven Results
 - ✓ Evidenced-based
 - ✓ Ready to Deliver

The solution is Positive Impact:

- Ready to deliver now – with established credibility in metro Brisbane area and operational since 2008
- No implementation or development required - resources developed
- Flexible and scalable delivery – phone and web-based
- Promotes preventive approach using existing primary care services
- No incentive payments required to encourage GP referrals
- 100% GP referrals with a high program retention rate
- Queensland-based
- Leverage Primary Health Networks (PHNs) as network for state-wide rollout and promotion

The benefits of Positive Impact:

- Statistically and clinically significant outcomes in key areas such as weight reduction, waist circumference, physical activity levels, fruit and vegetable intake and emotional eating behaviours
- Cost effective – use of telephone technology lowers overhead costs
- Suite of services available – telephone, chronic disease specific, culturally modified and web-based options
- Scalable –demonstrated expansion from a small area (Logan) to a larger area (GMSBML)
- High GP referral of participants and good retention rates
- Content quality – evidence based program, developed and refined over more than 7 years of experience
- Flexible model – offering patient choice of delivery method, ability to individualise content according to their needs
- Track record of GP engagement and program utilisation, 100% GP referrals
- Lifestyle approach (non-dieting approach) for long term behaviour change, sustainable results
- Risk factor reduction for a range of costly chronic conditions

The Positive Impact story

Positive Impact evolved from a place-based initiative in the Logan Beaudesert region funded under the Queensland Strategy for Chronic Disease. The program was developed based on the success of two pilot projects in the Logan Area – “the Living well with Diabetes Program” and “the Logan Healthy Living Program”.

The predecessor program (Dietary and Lifestyle Phone Support Program) saw approximately 450 patients between 2008 and 2013. Based on the program’s success, funding was secured from the Australian Government Department of Health and expanded to the wider Greater Metro South Brisbane Medicare Local area. More than 3200 referrals have been received in just over two years from 2013 to 2015.

Positive Impact was designed to promote lifestyle changes amongst individuals at risk of developing chronic conditions such as; diabetes, heart disease and obesity. The service aims to reduce the burden of chronic disease on the health system and improve patient health outcomes.

Positive Impact is a telephone based service (15-23 phone calls over 6-12 months) staffed by qualified health professionals who work with patients to improve nutrition, physical activity and weight management through permanent lifestyle change.

The current staffing of approximately 20 phone coaches who are high performing health professionals with training in health coaching achieve long term results through evidence based approaches. Content aligns with the Australian Guidelines for healthy eating, physical activity and sedentary behaviour.

In addition to being accredited practicing dietitians and qualified nutritionist, the phone coaches also receive training including:

- Motivational interviewing,
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy,
- Acceptance and Commitment therapy
- Mental health first aid
- In-service chronic disease upskilling

The GMSBML community is diverse in culture, socioeconomic, demographic and geographic characteristics, therefore the design needed to be accessible, affordable and appropriate for the community.

Positive Impact is delivered via telephone and is made available to patients free of charge. This delivery method has been designed to overcome challenges faced by our community of difficulty in accessing services, transport and cost.

To support the region’s higher than average population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Pacific Islander peoples, program resources have been modified to be more culturally suitable. The content was informed by extensive consumer consultation.

Although the service is delivered by telephone, our locally based positioning means that we are able to deliver face-to-face interventions when required. This can be in the form of meet and greets with participants and one-on-one physical activity consultations allowing our program to maximise patient outcomes.

Flexibility and patient choice are paramount to the success of Positive Impact. Patients work with their phone coach to develop their own personalised goals. Positive Impact tailors program content, format and the length of program to suit the patient's needs. The current service offering includes a 6 month program, 12 month program, chronic disease specific programs (diabetes, cardiovascular and kidney disease, chronic pain and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary disease) and an accelerated program (for pre-surgical patients requiring weight loss).

In addition, the online version of Positive Impact is due for launch in May 2015, to cater for patients who prefer to work through program content in an online medium. This service model will suit patients who are more technologically inclined, who prefer working through the program by themselves or would require access to the service afterhours. The online program is a cost effective service delivery alternative that compliments the telephone based model.

A unique characteristic of Positive Impact is the GP centric and collaborative approach adopted by the program. Patients can only access the service by referral from their GP or Specialist. GPs are required to provide key patient measurements at baseline, mid program, end program and 6 months following the program. The phone coach informs the GP of the patient's progress throughout the program. The phone coach will also link the patient with relevant health and community services as required, facilitating an integrated and coordinated approach to patient health. The ongoing relationship with the GP is a key success factor in identifying target patients, maintaining a high retention and completion rate of the program.

Positive Impact has a robust evaluation plan that contributes to building a strong evidence base for the intervention. The GP takes measures such as weight, waist circumference, body mass index, blood pressure and pathology (including cholesterol and blood glucose). The program also collects self-reported (patient) lifestyle and behavioural data, such as serves of fruit and vegetables, portions consumed and physical activity levels to name a few.

Positive Impact has partnered with Queensland University of Technology to undertake an extensive evaluation of the efficacy of the intervention, as well as measuring health economics, cost shift and scalability of the model.

Ready to deliver for Queensland

The Positive Impact program currently operates in the Greater Metro South Brisbane area which includes Brisbane City Council, Redland City Council, Logan City Council and Scenic Rim Regional Councils. The service has scaled up from its original scope of being delivered in the Logan area to encompass the whole of metro south Brisbane. The dual delivery medium of web-based and telephone, provides service capability on a state-wide basis, including patients in rural and remote areas and provides capability to target specific communities with higher prevalence of risk factors and chronic disease.

Working across the sector for better health outcomes

Positive Impact has demonstrated experience of collaboration between agencies to promote health and wellbeing. The program has successfully integrated with other non-government organisations that provide services to the target population, including direct interface with the Heart Foundation, Diabetes Queensland and the Council on the Ageing.

Positive Impact has successfully partnered with government services. An example of this collaboration is the partnership with the Logan Hospital, to provide an integrated service for pre-surgical patients who require weight loss to reduce risk and improve their health outcomes with their surgery. Positive Impact modified the

program to offer an accelerated delivery to assist pre-surgical patients with weight loss across a shorter time frame. Patients return to the program for post-surgery support to continue their weight loss journey. This example demonstrates the ability to effectively partner using an innovative approach to improve health outcomes for Queenslanders, share resources and therefore contain costs of health care. As Positive Impact offers a phone and web-based delivery, this type of partnership could be implemented in any identified area of need across the state

With respect to university partnerships, Positive Impact has engaged Queensland University of Technology (QUT) to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the service. In addition, QUT will also develop further evidence for the cost effectiveness of the service, the cost shift, reducing impact on hospital services and the scalability of the model.

In relation to the business sector, Positive Impact successfully implemented a workplace health and wellbeing program with a local transport company, a high risk sector for unhealthy weight, poor nutrition and low physical activity levels. The project comprised of active promotion of healthy lifestyle and the importance of visiting a GP. Project outcomes included identification of risk factors in staff, increase in GP visits to address preventive health concerns and identification of undiagnosed conditions. This partnership approach within workplaces can be easily replicated in areas identified as a high risk for health issues.

Program development through continuous improvement

Positive Impact has been refined over more than seven years of development. Improvements made to the program are based on the expertise, recommendations and feedback from our staff, GPs, customers and other key stakeholders. In addition, we have been regularly incorporating service improvements based on the lessons learned in other primary care interventions, in particular;

- **Targeted participant recruitment**

A number of health promotion interventions have experienced difficulty in recruiting participants, despite more than two out of three Australians being overweight or obese. Positive Impact has established and maintains a close working relationship with General Practitioners, who are the primary health care provider in the community. GPs screen patients and refer to Positive Impact for support with healthy lifestyle. In just over two years, Positive Impact has generated more than 3000 referrals. The average body mass index of participants is over 37, reflecting obesity class II. People in this group reflect a severe risk of co-morbidities. A key success of Positive Impact is targeting at risk people in the community. Our patient outcomes include a shift of BMI class, from obese class II to Obese class I, reflecting a reduction in risk from severe to moderate risk of comorbidities. These results demonstrate the effective targeting of the intervention to those at risk.

- **Participant retention rates**

A number of health promotion interventions across a variety of mediums (including face-to-face) experience high drop out rates. Positive Impact holds a strong retention rate and this is credited to the team based approach, involving the GP, phone coach and additional supports. Unlike other interventions, Positive Impact does not pay financial incentives to engage referring GPs. Positive Impact is currently undergoing an internal project to review the engagement and retention rates within the program. The focus is to actively seek recommendations from referring GPs and referred patients for improving access, engagement, retention and suitability of the intervention. Early results have shown an increase in contact rate and enrolment of participants by adjusting the central intake hours of operation to suit working individuals.

- **Clinically and statistically significant results**

A number of healthy lifestyle interventions report a challenge in achieving participant or program results with statistical and clinical significance.

Clinically significant outcomes have been achieved against a number of factors that contribute to the risk of chronic disease. Positive Impact has maintained an average of 5-10% weight reduction (5-10% weight loss is known to cause a 56% reduced risk of developing Type II diabetes), and statistically significant results across the following measures:

- Fruit intake
- Vegetable intake
- Minutes of physical activity
- Emotional eating behaviours

In addition to achieving these outcomes, evaluation has shown these positive health changes are maintained long term, as evidenced in data collected from patients 6 months following discharge from the Positive Impact program.

Positive Impact credits the attainment and maintenance of health outcomes to the collaborative GP approach adopted by the program and the use of non-dieting, behavioural change approaches that produce long term behaviour change.

- **Offering consumer choice and flexibility**

A number of lifestyle interventions are limited in both scope and flexibility. Positive Impact offers a flexible service model providing consumer choice across a range of program formats. Positive Impact is a comprehensive lifestyle intervention that aims to reduce risk factors and target a range of chronic conditions. Participants can enrol in a 6 or 12 month prevention program, chronic disease specific programs, an accelerated program, and soon, a web-based program. Participants are offered a high degree of flexibility regarding time and location to access the program because of the phone and web-based mediums used. Participants are able to temporarily suspend the program should a major life event occur. The program content is customised to suit the needs and goals of the participant.

- **Improving communication of health information, utilising innovative technology**

Most health care providers retain patient records that are not immediately, or easily accessible. Positive Impact utilises a live secure data base that contains all patient records. Through secure access to the CDMNet database, these live records are available to the patient, GP and phone coach at any given time. Other health professionals involved in the care team can be invited to view these records, which facilitate timely and accurate communication about the patient. Positive Impact is soon to embark on a trial of new technology incorporating the use of web cameras and peer to peer software to support visual call interaction in place of telephone calls.

This submission has been prepared by:

Sherron Madden,
Manager, Preventive Health
Greater Metro South Brisbane Medicare Local



30/04/2015

Authorised by:



30/04/2015

Simon James
Chief Executive Officer
Greater Metro South Brisbane Medicare Local