



Faster results at MPS

Emergency department (ED) patients who find themselves in need of care at Gundagai's Multi-Purpose Service (MPS) will benefit from faster access to pathology results and an improvement in overall care thanks to the introduction of two new devices being rolled out across 27 emergency departments in the Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD).

The hand-held point of care testing (PoCT) devices provide on-site analysis for blood gases, lactate, haemoglobin, troponin, chemistries and electrolytes – some of the most common pathology tests emergency departments rely on.

The MLHD is the latest district to adopt the program and is working with Pathology West, one of five NSW Health Pathology Networks, on the local rollout. The program aims to provide ED teams, particularly in regional and rural areas, with access to on-the-spot results for certain types of pathology tests so that they can deliver more timely care for patients.

Nursing staff at the MPS don't have access to 24-hour pathology laboratories, with Nurse Manager Jane Turner saying until the introduction of the two new devices this week, pathology samples needed to be sent off-site for analysis.

"Generally, if we needed urgent blood samples analysed they would have to be sent to Wagga, but by having these devices we can now get faster results for certain pathology tests which means we can make quicker clinical decisions and have a faster and more definitive diagnosis of acutely ill patients," Ms Turner said.

"The results can now also go into a database which can be seen all over NSW Health, if needed."

Ms Turner said another benefit of the integrated point of care program is the reduced travel time for some patients who might have otherwise had to travel for pathology tests.

Brian Heffernan, Senior Hospital Scientist for Pathology West, was at

the MPS to launch the new program last Tuesday morning, where registered nurses Lori Hogan, Lyn Schu-

bert and Jan Maskell took in the one hour training session to ensure the devices are used properly.

Dr Michael Whiley, Acting Director for Pathology West, said point of care testing contributes to better health care by significantly reducing turnaround time for some types of pathology tests.

"Point of care testing will never replace the full-fledged pathology laboratory which will continue to perform more detailed analysis and more technically advanced tests, however technology has advanced to a stage where we can now bring some parts of the pathology laboratory to the patient," Dr Whiley said.

He said clinical teams will be able to have confidence in the PoCT results, as the hand-held devices will be managed to the same quality systems as traditional laboratory instruments.

Susan Weisser, Chief Executive for MLHD, said some emergency departments in the MLHD already use some type of point of care device but the devices are different, offer a different range of tests and aren't networked.

"The managed PoCT strategy will increase reliability, consistency and accuracy of tests across the district," Ms Weisser said.

"It's a great opportunity to use technology to support better healthcare across our rural and regional communities, and we're excited to be working with NSW Health Pathology and Pathology West to lead the rollout in NSW."

Ms Turner said another device benefitting local patients over the past six months at the MPS is the Tele Health Video Link mounted to the ceiling in the ED which permits doctors in Wagga to see local patients via a link, allowing them to give treatment orders over a hands-free phone.

"The link enables specialists to support local medical officers. if

needed," Ms Turner said.

"For instance, if we have an ED patient with an eye injury, the device allows for the doctor in Wagga to see straight into the patient's eye here at the MPS, and then they can deliver instruction over the phone."

