



Community Breathlessness Intervention Services

What is the challenge?

Many people with lung and heart conditions live with breathlessness every day. Over the age of 65 years, 1 in 6 people experience breathlessness that stops them when walking at their own pace, and 1 in 25 are limited to only a few minutes walking or are too breathless to leave the house. Even when they receive good medical care, managing this distressing symptom stops people doing what they want to do on a daily basis. Many people with chronic breathlessness and their family/carers experience anxiety, depression and social isolation. Often other people lack understanding of the impact of chronic breathlessness and even some clinicians believe that 'nothing more can be done'.

Chronic breathlessness is a frequent reason for emergency department visits and hospital admissions - resulting in high health care costs for services, the person themselves and carers.

Internationally, growing research evidence supports the use of symptom-based care to lessen the effects of breathlessness on quality of life and distress to families. There is compelling evidence that in the year after receiving brief symptom-based interventions, unplanned hospital admissions reduce by as much as 50-60%. Despite this, few services are available in Australia that focus on the management of this troubling symptom.

About this research translation project

This project will directly translate a model for Breathlessness Intervention Services, developed and evaluated in randomised controlled trials in the UK and quality improvement projects in Canada, to the South Australian setting. The two activities of this project are:

1. Pilot, deliver and evaluate a home-based Breathlessness Intervention Service.
2. Develop, conduct and evaluate a co-designed training course for non-drug management of chronic breathlessness.

The inclusion of people with chronic breathlessness and other stakeholder groups in the design, conduct, evaluation and information-sharing about this project will ensure their views and values inform and influence the project's impact.



What will be the impact?

For people with chronic breathlessness and their carers:

We will generate evidence about how Breathlessness Intervention Services could work best in our local communities. Based on international studies we expect to reduce distress from breathlessness and improve quality of life.

For health care services:

The Community Breathlessness Intervention Service will deliver effective out-of-hospital care for this vulnerable and underserved group, with emphasis on collaboration across the tertiary-primary care divide. As people are better able to manage chronic breathlessness, avoidable hospital admissions should be reduced.

For clinicians:

We will build capacity to understand chronic breathlessness and deliver breathlessness management services across diverse settings by a range of health professionals.

For the Australian community:

Support to manage chronic breathlessness has potential to reduce the formal and informal costs of chronic breathlessness to individuals, families and communities, contributing to health, wellbeing and economic benefit.

Project contact details

Project Title Community Breathlessness Intervention Services

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