An analysis of an ongoing trial of rural teleconference fracture clinics

John North          Alison McGill
Orthopaedic Surgeon    Junior House Officer
Princess Alexandra Hospital, Brisbane

Declaration
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Teleconference fracture clinic


Mt Isa Hospital
- Orthopaedic PHO
- Biweekly fracture clinics
- Second opinion or operative management requires transfer of patient
- 883km east of Townsville
- Estimated cost $1269 per adult; $2134 per child with accompanying adult
TFC Process at PAH
- Friday teleconsultation fracture clinic
- Radiographer
- Radiology imaging system
- Nurse
- Charts
- Approximate additional cost $1285 per clinic

Teleconference clinics

Results
- Average number of patients reviewed per clinic = 10 (71% attendance)
- Transfers saved since Jan 2011 = 21
  Overall cost deficit = $170 per clinic
- 16 patient transfers saved in 2012
  Cost benefit = $1259 per clinic
Strengths

- Advantage for patients – social, financial
  - Reduced cost of travel
  - Faster return to work and less time off work
  - Earlier diagnosis of serious pathology
  - Expert discussion of treatments
  - Coordination of treatment plans
  - Fewer transfers, including accompanying person

- Service to multiple centres
- Shorter distance travelled
- Post-operative care
- Support and educational opportunity for rural doctors
- Access to specialist opinion
- Support for managing simple cases

Case Study

- 50yo woman - Left distal fibula fracture 5 weeks previously, placed in short leg cast
- Presented to Teleconference clinic complaining of pain and unable to weight bear
- Consultant discovered past history of breast cancer, pathological nature of fracture and possible distal tibia lesion

Improvements

- Attendance 71%
  - Improve with education, advertising, and reminders
- Electronic appointment book and paperless clinical notes
  - Saving of cost of charts and administrative time
  - Could serve multiple locations
- Delay in transfer of radiographic images
  - State-wide synchronised radiology service
  - Reduced visits to hospital for imaging for patients
Conclusion

- Significant patient benefit
- Fewer patient transfers
- Increased running costs, but cost effective in 2012
- Could be expanded to multiple locations

Thank you