

Travel-based relocation: The New Zealand experience.



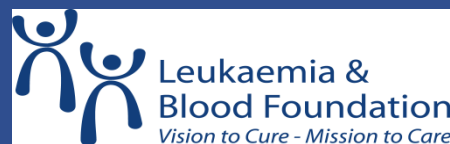
Dr Pam McGrath B.Soc.Wk., MA., Ph D, Director
International Program of Psycho-Social Health Research (IPP-SHR)

Griffith University

Amy Munro BHSc (Nurs)

Support Services Manager

Leukaemia and Blood Foundation



Background

- Relocation research predominantly Australian based
- Focus on vast distances
- Documented major psycho-social and administrative problems associated with relocation for specialist care
- The research led to a Senate Inquiry:
- *‘Highway to health: better access for rural, regional and remote patients’*, Senate Committee Report, Canberra, 2007.



Methodology

- Cross sectional, New Zealand wide, retrospective, qualitative study
62 participants (46 patients & 16 carers)
- Comprehensive purposive sample from L&BF data base
- Criteria - did not live in the city of treating centre ; for some of treatment forced to live for a period of time away from home at the location of the treating centre

Diagnosis

- Leukaemia –22
- Myeloma –14
- Lymphoma –18
- Other –8

Specialist Centre

- Auckland - 7
- Christchurch - 15
- Dunedin - 15
- Hamilton - 9
- Wellington - 16

Data saturation

The many challenges and stresses

- Have to leave immediately
- Unfamiliarity and alienation of hospital situation
- Accommodation issues
- Parking
- Life on hold



The stress and uncertainty continues

- Returning home
- Financial impact
- Carer issues
- Other life stresses at same time
- Importance of good information
- Reliance on family, friends and community



Important role of support organisations

- Information booklets
- Person to person contact
- Opportunity to talk
- Support groups
- Newsletters
- Yoga and meditation classes
- Petrol and grocery vouchers
- Financial assistance
- Volunteer drivers
- Assistance with shopping
- Free bus services

National Transport Assistance Scheme – Lessons learned

- Most knew about and had positive experiences with the scheme
- Importance of person-to-person information and support
- Hospital social workers and treating health professionals ideal contact people
- Easy to complete forms, staff available to assist with the process, a clear line of administration for approvals

Reconceptualising Relocation

- Prior research
‘accommodation-based’
relocation
- First time documented
‘travel-based’ relocation



Commitment to ‘travel-based’ relocation based on benefit

- Manage personal life
- Maintain home
- Access comforts of home
- Reduce loneliness
- Gain family, friend and community support
- Opportunity to recuperate and improve
- Maintain work and farm commitments
- Gaining a sense of normalcy



Facilitators

- Understanding and support from health professionals of the benefits of returning home
- Strong desire to return home
- Distances make it possible
 - - some practically and easily achieved
 - - others lengthy in time and distance and imposed considerable hardship on the patient and their carer

Caveat

These insights do not trivialise the sheer hardship associated with daily travel to and from the hospital and the findings from the study affirm the difficulties faced by families in this regard.

Implications (1)

- Does not alter the need for accommodation
- Heightens awareness that those in accommodation vulnerable to missing out on all the benefits of being able to return home



Implications (2)

- The focus needs to be on providing supportive travel arrangements where possible
- Importance of volunteers that assist with travel
- Significance of financial assistance for travel



Implications (3)

- Affirms the importance of health professionals who are supportive and creative in their efforts to assist people to return home.
- Significant clinical and safety issues associated with travel – not an argument against but for care and caution
- Need to address issues in relation to nausea and pain management for those travelling

Thank you for listening

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE STUDY

- McGrath P, Holewa H, Etcheverry P. (2011) Surviving the crisis of relocation for specialist treatment in haematology: Insights from New Zealand, **Illness Crisis and Loss** 19, 3:233-247.
- McGrath P, Holewa H, Munro A. (2011) Government funded travel and accommodation assistance: Learning from inter-country research. **Journal of Rural and Tropical Public Health** In Press.
- McGrath P. & Holewa H. (2011) Reconceptualising Relocation for Specialist Treatment: Insights from New Zealand, **Supportive Care in Cancer** Online First.
- McGrath P. & Holewa H. (2011) **The New Zealand Experience of Relocation for treatment for haematological malignancies**, Report for Leukaemia & Blood Foundation, Auckland New Zealand.

