

Rapid Access Atrial Fibrillation Clinics

Summary report

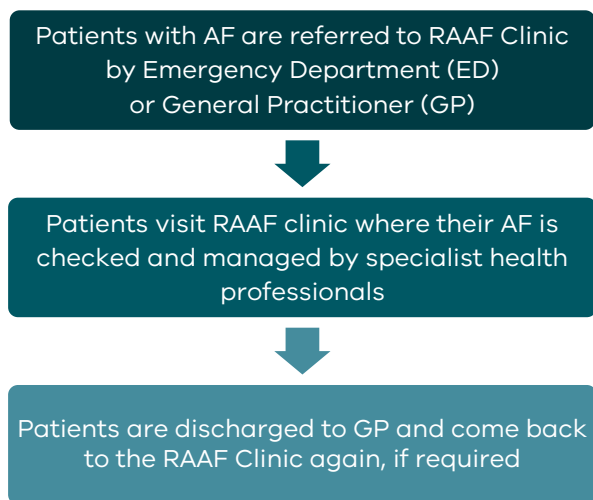
In 2021, Safer Care Victoria (SCV) partnered with regional hospitals to improve care for Victorians diagnosed with atrial fibrillation. Our priority was to improve quality of care and reduce wait times for patients to receive care from specialist health professionals.

BACKGROUND

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a common heart condition that increases the risk of stroke for many Australians with heart and blood vessel diseases. Preventing delays in detection and treatment of AF is essential for better health outcomes.

AIM

The Rapid Access Atrial Fibrillation (RAAF) Clinics project was established to provide fast and specialist care to regional Victorians diagnosed with AF within 14 days of discharge from the Emergency Department. The image below describes how the project works.



IMPROVEMENT APPROACH

SCV held regular online meetings with health services to provide improvement coaching, share learnings, and discuss challenges. Group meetings and emails encouraged collaboration among health services.

RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Health services

Six hospitals in regional Victoria.

Impact and duration

2,024 Victorians received care at the RAAF Clinics between March 2022 and October 2023.

Project measures

- Average time to when patients are seen by a specialist doctor at a RAAF Clinic from referral date.
- Number of patients readmitted to hospital within 30 days of discharge.
- % of stroke and bleeding assessments completed.
- % of patients who receive a care set and individualised AF management plan.
- Change in patients' quality of life after discharge from a RAAF Clinic.

Results

- Wait times to see a specialist doctor reduced from an average of 3 months to an average of 3 weeks.
- Decreased the number of patients needing to visit the emergency department or be readmitted to hospital.
- 25% of patients with AF reported better quality of life after attending the clinics.

KEY LESSONS

Health services identified a number of important factors which lead to successful results for their RAAF Clinic. These included the following:

- Assigning a clinic coordinator to make sure the RAAF Clinic runs smoothly
- Promoting the RAAF Clinic to relevant clinical staff so they are aware of the service and make use of the referral pathway
- Making the referral process quick and simple
- Creating a discharge process that ensures patients are referred to their GP or other services for ongoing care
- Collaborating with other health services to share knowledge and create a supportive social network
- Involve junior clinical staff to provide support during workforce shortages
- Assessing the RAAF Clinic's performance by monitoring the number of patients attending and their wait times, and addressing potential issues

RESULTS

While the RAAF Clinics did not hit their target of seeing patients within 14 days of referral, the wait time was still reduced to about 3 weeks. This is better than the previous wait time of about 3 months for cardiology outpatient appointments.

The project meant Victorians could access a greater number of clinics dedicated to AF, increasing the availability of more affordable AF care, and improved the access to AF care for regional Victorians.

Health professionals saw improvements in AF management at the RAAF Clinics, with a high percentage of patients receiving essential testing (98%), rate/rhythm management plans (91%) and full care sets (98%).

The RAAF Clinics have shown improvements in the quality of life for patients with AF, with 25% reporting better quality of life.

Patients who used the RAAF Clinics rarely went back to the emergency department (3.3%) or were readmitted to a hospital (3.8%) within 30 days of being discharged, suggesting better ongoing care management.

83% of patients reported a high level of satisfaction with the service. They especially appreciated the fast service and attention from specialists, which was seen as a significant improvement from previous experiences.

EVALUATION APPROACH

An evaluation of the RAAF Clinics project was conducted by Deloitte Touché Tohmatsu. Its findings are the basis for this report.

RESOURCES

- [Guide to implementing a RAAF clinic at your health service](#)
- Heart Foundation - [Australian clinical guidelines for the diagnosis and management of atrial fibrillation](#)

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