



Research Theme
Access to Services

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1. Introduction:

One of the seven fundamental principles of the *New Zealand Health Strategy* is 'equitable access for all New Zealanders to a comprehensive range of health and disability services'. The DHBRF Governance Group identified Access to Services as a key focus for the fund, and specifically the improvement of access to primary care, medications and diagnostic services for vulnerable populations.



The Access to Services theme has been addressed by the DHBRF with an RFP released early in 2007, with the aim of enhancing service delivery and in turn having the potential to reduce inequalities. The funded project profiled in this enews is led by Dr Barry Gribben as part of a collaboration across DHBs, PHOs and other health care providers.

Ross Lawrenson, Professor of Primary Care at the Waikato Clinical School, has provided a valuable perspective on a particular priority for access improvement: rural isolation.

A fantastic example of innovation in the area of access is the ChatBus established this year in Dunedin. Developed from concern over rates of teen suicide, the ChatBus mobile counseling facility was set up for teenagers who would not normally have access to this sort of service.

Also included are references to peer-reviewed journal articles published by HRC funded researchers in the area of access to services. These naturally cover many health conditions and facets of DHB interests.

Next month's DHBRF e-news will come back to the topic of **Innovation** – how are we faring nine months on from the Sharing Innovation Workshop? We are very interested in hearing from anyone wishing to share positive innovative experiences resulting from inspiration at the conference. Please email ahaggie@hrc.govt.nz if you have any contributions on this topic that may be of interest to newsletter readers.

2. Access to Services Project Profile: Dr Barry Gribben

Both effectiveness and timeliness of access to health services are essential in ensuring equity of health outcomes. The project funded through the DHBRF in the area of access to services has the potential to improve New Zealanders' access to health services in this way.

The project is led by Dr Barry Gribben of CBG Health Research Limited, with a collaborative approach involving DHBs, PHOs and other health care providers around New Zealand. The research will identify and learn more about actions and solutions that improve access to health services for vulnerable population groups, with a particular focus on access to primary care, medications and diagnostic services.



“There are a wide range of initiatives both within New Zealand and internationally, and a lot of knowledge about what works and what doesn't. Our research project will help the sector share these experiences and develop practical tools for implementing proven interventions,” Dr Gribben says.

Download a full project profile [here](#).

3. Professor Ross Lawrenson: Rural Health Inequalities

Ross Lawrenson is Professor of Primary Care at the Waikato Clinical School, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, University of Auckland. He originally trained as a general practitioner in the UK before emigrating to New Zealand where he worked in Te Kuiti hospital and then became a rural general practitioner in Wairoa. Since then he has worked in the Waikato and the UK as a public health specialist and academic researcher. Ross was Chair of the Steering Committee for the DHBRF Access RFP.



In this issue of the DHBRF e-news Ross discusses the key issue for New Zealand of access to health care for people living in rural areas. Many of our rural communities are high need but paradoxically with relatively low demand. DHBs have a much clearer picture of the local needs – their challenge is often how to best provide services to needy communities when there are major workforce shortages in rural areas.

Download Ross Lawrenson's full contribution [here](#).

4. ChatBus: Access Innovation in Action

The ChatBus free mobile counseling service for Intermediate School children in Dunedin came about as a response to the spate of youth suicides in Dunedin in 2006. Research repeatedly shows that early intervention is the most effective method for positive and significant change, and as such the ChatBus Trust decided to target the 10-13 year age group with the intention of providing a safe, easily accessible intervention in a familiar setting without kids having to involve parents in order to access help.



This new innovative way to improve access to services for young people utilises a small bus converted into a counseling room, providing a safe, confidential environment on the school grounds. As school counselors are not funded in Intermediate Schools, ChatBus fills a new niche and is able to provide the flexibility to cover several Intermediate level schools with professional services by a qualified counselor.

ChatBus has only been in operation since the beginning of the 2008 school year, but is already proving popular with the children, and is also viewed by staff as a positive addition to the school environment. The ChatBus Trust believes that being able to provide an easy access to support and by working with these young people, their problems can be dealt with while they are manageable before they get too big to handle, and also at a time when young people are open to talk.

Information pamphlets about the ChatBus initiative can be downloaded [here](#) and [here](#). The [ChatBus website](#) is currently under construction but if you would like more information please contact Averil Pierce by email chatbustrust@gmail.com or phone 03 476 3132 or 027 3525 032.

5. Recent Publications by New Zealand Researchers

New Zealand has an excellent track record in producing research results for presentation in international journals. The issue of enabling access to services has priority across many fields of research, including chronic care, child health and health services management to name a few.

Some recent publications from HRC funded researchers have been highlighted for [download here](#), that may be relevant to DHB core business across a number of fields.

[Download here](#) a selection of HRC funded projects related to the issue of access to services.

6 . Next DHBRF e-newsletter:

The next issue of the DHBRF e-newsletter will focus on **Innovation**, as a follow up to the 2007 DHBRF Sharing Innovation Workshop. Please contact us if you would like to tell us how you/your organisation has benefited from inspiration at the workshop. If you have a proposed newsletter item relevant to this theme please email ahaggie@hrc.govt.nz

7 . About the purpose of the DHBRF e-newsletter:

- Provide DHBs with information relevant to DHB core business i.e. funding and planning activities
- Identify research that could inform planning for public health services
- Identify less relevant research which may have more of a biomedical focus
- Monthly communications focus on one of the priority population health goals as outlined in the New Zealand Health Strategy
- Information is taken from an annual HRC report identifying publications produced by New Zealand research teams or funded by the HRC between May 2005 – June 2006

Information included represents highlights of findings of high-quality research, readily available at the time of writing

8 . Subscribe/unsubscribe

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9 . Contact Us:

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