

# **COMMUNITY BASED REHABILITATION IN AUSTRALIA: IN-HOME SERVICES**

By Deborah Neff

Health professionals and funders are increasingly proclaiming the value of in-home Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) services for patients experiencing functional limitations due to injury, illness, surgery or aging. This includes physiotherapy in the community following an acute hospital stay; for example, knee surgery or hip replacement.

In Australia, private hospital and independent healthcare providers provide rehabilitation programs and, with the doctor's consent, can refer a patient for rehabilitative services in their own home. Referrals are generally made by hospitals, but can also be made by rehabilitation facilities, general practitioners, specialists and/or community services.

The fundamental premise of CBR is the decentralization of services, resources, and financial responsibility to community-level organizations. CBR is based on collaboration between the Allied Health Professional, Community Based Workers, and the broader community, and may include nurses and medical specialists.

In addition to physiotherapy, the types of services offered for in-home CBR for a functional injury include occupational therapy, exercise physiology, social work, speech pathology, personal care assistance, and short-term equipment loan. These services are performed by medical specialists, nurses, Allied Health Professionals, Community Based Workers, and others in the patient's home rather than in the hospital or clinic.

While some in-home CBR rehabilitation is covered by Medicare, most physiotherapy and other allied health services must be met by private insurance. The costs of rehabilitation due to injury may also be covered through State and Territory accident schemes such as the Transport Accident Commission in Victoria or through state-based government agencies providing workman's compensation, such as Workcover Queensland and Workcover West Australia.

## **ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS ON THE STATE OF THE INDUSTRY**

1. In-home CBR has yet to catch on in Australia. While many countries have embraced in-home CBR following surgery, in-hospital rehabilitation in Australia increased from 31 percent of patients in 2009 to 45 percent in 2016 in private hospitals. (In the public system the rate is 17 percent.)
2. Recommended by WHO for developing countries and rural segments of developed countries, CBR still lacks core research studies, reviews, and evidence-based practices.
3. CBR has become increasingly recognized as a productive model of service delivery in Australia's remote and rural communities, and especially for Indigenous communities. A public health issue, collaborative efforts need to include:
  - additional training at the local level
  - realignment of professional training (including community workers)
  - community education
  - reprioritization and redirection of resources.

A network of community-based rehabilitation coalitions is being proposed to address the accessibility of rehabilitation and therapy services in remote and rural Australia.

## **CONCLUSION**

In-home CBR may well be the next frontier in patient-centered physiotherapy, as it reduces costs and allows patients to stay at home and in their community when receiving rehabilitative care. But unmet needs in the industry are many, as indicated above. Most importantly, in-home CBR is a relatively new model in Australia that builds on community capacity at both the individual and community level, and thus requires further research and coordination between communities, hospitals, private insurance companies, Medicare, and health practitioners in order for it to be a solid option for patients undergoing rehabilitative therapy.

## **SOURCES:**

[Source 1]

Source URL: <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2018/209/5/predictors-inpatient-rehabilitation-after-total-knee-replacement-analysis>

Source Title: "Predictors of inpatient rehabilitation after total knee replacement: an analysis of private hospital claims data"

Publication Date: 08/27/2018

Relevancy: Compares in-patient rehabilitation with in-home, community-based rehabilitation

Credibility: Medical Journal of Australia research paper

[Source 2]

Source URL: <https://www.nslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/Services/Directory/Documents/Home-Based%20Rehab%20Prog%20brochure%20June15.pdf>

Source Title: "Home Based Rehabilitation Program"

Publication Date: Website, not available

Relevancy: Referral system for home rehabilitation in Australia

Credibility: Royal Rehab Rehabilitation and Disability Support Network brochure/website

[Source 3]

Source URL: <https://ahpa.com.au/key-areas/rehabilitation/>

Source Title: "Allied Health Professionals Australia: Rehabilitative Care"

Publication Date: Website: 2017

Relevancy: Allied health professionals increasingly provide rehabilitative care in the home.

Credibility: Allied Health Professionals Website

[Source 4]

Source URL: [https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/disability-discrimination/submissions/carol\\_odonnell\\_/sub159.pdf](https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/disability-discrimination/submissions/carol_odonnell_/sub159.pdf)

Source Title: "Policy, Funding and Management Strategies to Promote Health, Community Based Rehabilitation and Regional Development in Australia"

Publication Date: No date.

Relevancy: Contextualizes rehabilitation and disability management and support and addresses development issues for CBR in remote and rural areas of Australia

Credibility: Govt. of Australia research paper

[Source 5]

Source URL: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/f2ae1191-bbf2-47b6-a9d4-1b2ca65553a1/ah16-2-1-how-does-australias-health-system-work.pdf.aspx>

Source Title: "How does Australia's health system work?" Australia's Health 2016.

Publication Date: 2016

Relevancy: Overview of Australia's health system

Credibility: Research paper, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Govt. of Australia.

[Source 6]

Source URL: <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/health-science/knee-patients-better-off-at-home/news-story/5c976a0ae54149f672cfa25dbdd62637>:

Source Title:

“Knee patients ‘better off at home’”

Publication Date: 08/27/2018

Relevancy: CBR health outcomes

Credibility: The Australian (newspaper)

[Source 7]

Source URL: <https://www.gmhba.com.au/health/rith>

Source Title: “Rehabilitation in the Home”

Publication Date: 2019

Relevancy: While the subject is RITH, the article provides information on referrals for home rehabilitation.

Credibility: Website: GMHBA is an Australian not-for-profit health fund with more than 80 years’ experience.

[Source 8]

Source URL:

[https://www.ruralhealth.org.au/10thNRHC/10thnrhc.ruralhealth.org.au/papers/docs/Bonner\\_Ann\\_E2.pdf](https://www.ruralhealth.org.au/10thNRHC/10thnrhc.ruralhealth.org.au/papers/docs/Bonner_Ann_E2.pdf)

Source Title: “A sustainable approach to community-based rehabilitation in rural and remote Australia”

Publication Date: 2014

Relevancy: This paper presents a summary of an extensive review of the health, disability and rehabilitation literature conducted for the purposes of informing the formulation of a sustainable approach to community-based rehabilitation in rural and remote Australia.

Credibility: Research paper delivered at 10th National Rural Health Conference

[Source 9]

Source URL:

<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/09a8b3804e49fa3f9249dac09343dd7f/15137.3-26+Rehab+Services-Sec.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=ROOTWORKSPACE-09a8b3804e49fa3f9249dac09343dd7f-mLAFYkV>

Source Title: "Clinical Services Capability Framework: Rehabilitative Services"

Publication Date: 08/2016

Relevancy: Clinical overview

Credibility: SA Health

[Source 10]

Source URL: <https://www.medibank.com.au/livebetter/my-medibank/using-your-cover/rehab-in-the-home/>

Source Title: "Recover from Joint Replacement Surgery at Home"

Publication Date: 12/21/2017

Relevancy: Medibank's Home Rehabilitation Program; the role of private health insurance

Credibility: Medibank website