

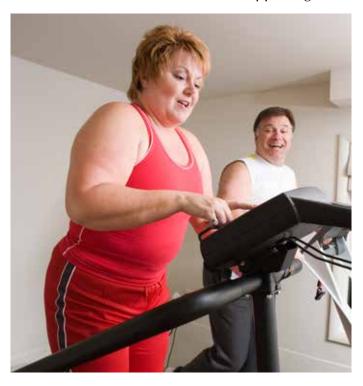
Improving the delivery of cardiac rehabilitation in Australia

The Heart Foundation's Cardiac Rehabilitation Advocacy Strategy



A critical step in a he

Heart disease is the leading single cause of death of men and women in Australia and affects 685,000 people.^{1,2} Each year around 55,000 Australians suffer a heart attack.³ On discharge from hospital, every patient should be referred to a cardiac rehabilitation program to start them on the road to recovery and ongoing management of their condition. But this is not happening.



Cardiac rehabilitation is a professionally supervised program usually lasting between 6 and 10 weeks. Supporting people with heart disease and other heart conditions, programs include physical activity, health education, counselling, behaviour modification strategies and support for self-management.⁴

Heart disease is a lifelong condition that needs ongoing management for patients to live longer and healthier lives.

The issue

Repeat heart attacks are all too common and costly. A third of all heart attacks in Australia are repeat events and in 2010 the cost of these repeat events exceeded \$8 billion⁵. Cardiac rehabilitation can saves lives and money, with research showing that it leads to improved patient outcomes, including fewer deaths and hospital readmissions⁶.

Cardiac rehabilitation programs are only effective if people attend. With estimated participation rates as low as 10-30% the benefits of cardiac rehabilitation are not being realised⁷. A recent UK modelling study found that increasing cardiac rehabilitation delivery to 65% of eligible patients resulted in a 10% reduction in emergency readmissions and saved over £30 million⁸.

The key challenges to improve the uptake of cardiac rehabilitation are well established and include:

- lack of referral to cardiac rehabilitation programs
- varied belief and support in the value of cardiac rehabilitation by the clinical profession
- emphasis on traditional cardiac rehabilitation models that can present barriers to patients who are younger, work, live remotely, have cultural or language needs or do not wish to attend a group format
- complex and unstable funding arrangements
- lack of data and performance monitoring. 6, 9, 10

art patient's journey

Time for action

As part of the Heart Foundation *For all Hearts* 2013–2017 strategic plan, we have developed a strategy to improve cardiac rehabilitation service provision in Australia. The six key priority areas for action are:

- 1. Support national, state and territory efforts to integrate **referral** to cardiac rehabilitation services as a **standard component of cardiac care**.
- 2. Establish uniform quality performance measures, data collection and routine reporting.
- 3. **Increase public awareness** of cardiac rehabilitation and its benefits.
- 4. Enhance health professional engagement and education on the importance of cardiac rehabilitation.
- 5. Identify **funding reform** to drive service improvements and boost referral and participation.
- 6. Document and promote key principles and examples of good practice in the provision of **different models** of cardiac rehabilitation throughout Australia.

Collectively, these efforts will:

- increase patient participation
- reduce hospital re-admissions
- improve health and quality of life outcomes.

Cardiac rehabilitation is the first, critical step on the road to recovery from a heart attack. We know it works. We need to make sure it works for everyone.



Want to know more? Email clinicalissues@heartfoundation.org.au





For heart health information 1300 36 27 87 www.heartfoundation.org.au

Supporting document: Secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease: a call to action to improve the health of Australians available at www.heartfoundation.org.au/coronary-heart-disease

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