Welcome to the Nursing and Midwifery Telehealth Consortia’s first newsletter.

**Hellos and Goodbyes**

The project team of Shoshana, Kaye, Lesley and Susan would like to welcome Kathy Bell, APNA’s recently appointed CEO. We also would like to thank Felicity Johns for all of her work on the Telehealth project and wish her well in her new role.

**Project Beginnings**

The project team have established the groundwork for the Telehealth project. They and begun work on several streams to promote, support and enlighten Practice Nurses, Midwives and Nurse Practitioners about Telehealth.

**The Survey**

Nurses and Midwives were surveyed to ascertain baseline knowledge and usage of Telehealth nationally. We also wanted to know about what enabled some practices to use Telehealth and what were the barriers to using Telehealth. The survey was disseminated through each of the consortia members’ websites. (The midwives were the best responders with 198 responses – 68 ANF)

Overall there was a positive interest in Telehealth from the respondents;

- 35% knew about TH and had been active with it.
- 32% understood the social and cost benefits of using TH.
- 20% were considering using TH
- 15% had a sound knowledge and understanding of TH.

Some of the areas of need amongst the respondents were;

- 15% had no knowledge or awareness of the TH initiatives in Australia
- 20% had little understanding to TH other than as a term
- 51.3% did not know that eligible Nurse Practitioners and Midwives can claim their own MBS item numbers.
- 59% did not know that Practice Nurses and Aboriginal Health Workers can sit in on behalf of a GP and can claim a specific MBS item number

In addition it was found that although there were many practitioners using Telehealth nationally their numbers were small 40% or respondents were not using Telehealth due to lack of resources and another 20% said that poor connectivity was an issue.

Also interesting was that 7.3% of the respondents were already MBS eligible and another 12.2 % were in the process of becoming MBS eligible.

Overall the survey has been very useful in identifying areas of need and this information was reinforced by our ten site visits.

**Telehealth Education Module**

The Education Advisory Group has met for the first of a series of meetings over the next few months and the Telehealth Online Education Package (OLP) is currently being developed. With the first module scheduled for release in November/ December. It is envisaged that this free and interactive online education package will be hosted by all five consortia members.

**Telehealth Information**

General resources have been developed and each of the consortia partners has information in the form of fact sheets For Practitioners (Nurse Practitioners, Midwives Practice Nurses and AHW) For Patients, Case Studies and MBS item information.

http://www.apna.asn.au/

**Professional Standards and Clinical Guidelines**

Professional Guidelines and clinical guidelines are being developed by the ANF to guide Nurses, Nurse Practitioners and Midwives in the provision of health services via Telehealth.

**Conferences**

Susan, Kaye and Lesley have attended and spoken at a number conferences and seminars over the past few months and we would like to thank you for your support and interest. We will include a more detailed conference report in the next newsletter.