

Joe's journey

Flinders LGA – Colorectal Cancer

Joe is a 76-year-old retired butcher, who lives with his wife in Hughenden. They have a large supportive family and have been very active in the community for more than 50 years.

Joe has several comorbidities, and after being diagnosed with adenocarcinoma of the bowel (colorectal cancer), the specialist has told him that surgery would not be possible and that he could receive some treatment to slow down the process.



COLONOSCOPY

Joe drives 4 hours & plans to stay overnight in a hotel but receives a cancer diagnosis from the gastroenterologist. He remains in Townsville for further imaging so the specialist can advise on treatment options.

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The cancer care nurses refer John & his wife to the Cancer Council hotline to access accommodation and some counselling support.

PRIMARY CARE

Joe drives 1 hour to Richmond to see the General Practitioner (GP). The Hughenden GP has been on leave for 2 weeks & there is no replacement.

Key Themes:

- Hughenden is a one doctor town
- Rural workforce shortages
- Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme
- 400km from tertiary hospital
- Use of Retrieval Services Queensland
- Visiting allied health services
- Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme



SPECIALIST CARE AT TOWNSVILLE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL (TUH):

Over the following year, Joe has multiple hospital admissions, oncology day unit appointments and other outpatient appointments with surgeons, medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, infectious disease specialists, radiation therapists, dietitians, social workers and physiotherapists.

When Joe returns home, between treatments he is referred to visiting allied health clinicians and tele-chemotherapy at Hughenden Multi Purpose Health Service (MPHS) is considered.

TRANSITION TO SYMPTOM CONTROL

Oncology Nurse Navigator talks to Joe & his wife about the benefits of palliative care as the oncology treatments are focused on symptom control.

HOME CARE

Flinders Shire Council Community Care increase in-home care as Joe's needs increase. When Joe has admissions to the MPHS, Community Care, the GP and Hughenden MPHS work with Joe's family to ensure they have the required support at home.



SPECIALIST PALLIATIVE CARE

The oncologist refers to Specialist Palliative Care Rural Telehealth Service (SPaRTa) who meet Joe at the Day Unit and then provide ongoing telehealth with the GP and Hughenden MPHS. Joe's wishes are documented.

JOE'S FUNCTION DECLINES

Charters Towers Hospital Allied Health Team visit. Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme fund aids.

DYING AT HOME

The Hughenden MPHS aged care coordinator supports Joe's family and friends to care for him at home with the help of regular telehealth with SPaRTa.



HOSPITAL-BASED AMBULANCE

Joe is transferred to Hughenden MPHS several times so his family can have some respite and medications can be optimised.

Potential issues/barriers:

- Travel to Townsville HHS for biopsy/imaging that can't be done in Hughenden
- Travel & accommodation required
- Where is his preferred place of care?
- His wife's capability of caring for him
- Letters from treating team to GP may take several days (posted, not emailed)
- GP not always available for shared-consults with specialist teams



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Joe returns home with MPHS nurses assisting family with cares. Joe dies 2 days later.