

25 June 2009

Ground breaking services launched for chronic diseases

Patients with chronic diseases will now have access to a range of ground breaking services delivered in their homes through telephonic, online and personal care.

Launched today by Australian Unity, the programs are the first of their type in Australia and will be offered by Remedy Healthcare Group ('Remedy').

The programs for patients with diseases such as congestive heart failure, osteoporosis and coronary artery disease are supported by a sophisticated chronic disease management software system (CDMS). This new technology will provide sophisticated decision support to better manage a patient's chronic conditions. It also enables the patient to have access to and share their medical information with relevant care providers.

Remedy will be the only private business of its kind in Australia to offer fully integrated and evidence-based chronic disease management services to individuals and companies in the private health sector.

While wholly owned by Australian Unity, Remedy will operate as a separate business entity.

The services represent a fundamental shift in private health insurance from claims management to providing health care services—a move the Federal Government supports and endorses.

"Chronic diseases are estimated to account for 80 percent of Australia's total disease burden and 99 percent of people are impacted by chronic disease in their lifetime either through a family member, a friend or through their own experience," says Rohan Mead, Australian Unity's Group Managing Director.

"The Remedy programs and services are designed to be available to the private and public healthcare system and through this network they can make a positive impact on the health of a significant proportion of Australia's population."

The Remedy programs and services focus on preventing or reducing avoidable hospital admissions by substituting hospital in-patient services with in-home care. This will be achieved through the provision of telephone based self management programs and Allied Health care services in the home.

In developing the programs, Remedy recognised the need for complete, integrated care services for treating chronic illness, particularly for people most at risk of

hospitalisation. By also enabling home rehabilitation services, Remedy now has the ability to supplement its telephone-based self management programs with in-home care.

“Rehability, our home rehabilitation business allows us to send an Allied Health professional into the home of any of our members across Melbourne. Through our web enabled CDMS, we can provide co-ordinated care plans for patients and an electronic framework for continuous monitoring for our patients most at risk of hospital re-admission,” says John Meckiff, General Manager of Remedy.

“This is a win-win solution for everyone—where clinically appropriate patients get to stay in the comfort of their own home, hospitals can provide more beds for needy patients, and private health funds help their members improve their health and thus reduce the volume of claims over time,” says John.

Remedy also recognises that there are many opportunities in the development and progression of chronic disease to engage patients in learning and behaviour change.

“We want to help patients who currently face difficulties in their management of chronic disease to stay as healthy as possible,” adds John.

“Our Heart Failure program is an example of how we have designed services to provide patients with best evidence guidelines for improving management of their condition in their own home.”

ends.

For further information or to arrange an interview with Rohan Mead and John Meckiff, contact: PR for Australian Unity: Jenny Littlewood on 0403 359 864 or email: jenny@curriecom.com.au, or Julia Balderstone on 0413 852 796 or email: julia@curriecom.com.au

Australian Unity contact: Abdi Noor, Public Affairs & Communications Manager, 0429 187 105 or anoor@australianunity.com.au

Notes to the editor

Australian Unity provides healthcare, financial planning, investment, and retirement living services to more than 400,000 Australians.

Australian Unity’s history as a trusted mutual organisation dates back more than 165 years. Its business approach can be summed up as developing and providing health, financial and lifestyle services capable of making a difference to the wellbeing of members, customers, employees and communities.

At Australian Unity, the wellbeing of our members is at the heart of everything we do. This is the key premise underpinning our wellness philosophy. We strive to help members stay healthy and assist those who are unwell to get better as quickly as possible.