

Summary & Response to External Benchmarking

Heart and Lung Transplantation Services - TPCH

Summary

The Prince Charles Hospital (TPCH) initiated an external benchmarking exercise in relation to its Heart and Lung Transplant services in May 2024 to determine areas of strength and improvement to ensure the program remains at the forefront of transplant care.

A panel of clinical specialists from various healthcare organisations across Australia with specific expertise and interest in transplantation was established to undertake an independent evaluation of these transplant services in July 2024. The panel's goal was to ensure the services operate with contemporary best practice.

The panel found that Heart and Lung Transplant services at The Prince Charles Hospital (TPCH) are essential in continuing to support the health of Queenslanders, however there are some improvements which could be made, especially within the Heart Transplant Service.

The panel developed a report containing recommendations to support the improved productivity and effectiveness of transplant services with the overarching goal to improve the subsequent outcome of current and future patients. Recommendations relate to the key themes of new technology, research and training; patient-centred and evidence-based models of care and clinical governance, staffing and resources; and staff wellbeing.

Broadly, the experts acknowledge that transplantation is a complex clinical journey, which requires input from consumers with lived experience and many teams and areas of the hospital before, during and after transplant. This requires a flexible and supportive working environment which encourages teamwork and collaboration with an open commitment to and accountability for practising the organisation's values.

New Technology, Research and Training

It was recommended that the heart transplant services adopt additional contemporary donor organ procurement technology (such as X-VIVO heart box). The report recommended more focus on mechanical circulatory support and advanced technologies. The panel recommended strengthening the current collaborative research programs at TPCH.

Models of Care and Clinical Governance

A number of recommendations we made related to models of care and improved clinical governance processes within the Heart Transplant Service. These included refreshing local evidence-based protocols, pathways and guidelines for patient centred care at all stages of the transplant journey, improved data collection and outcome reporting, enhanced function of the multidisciplinary team meetings and improved documentation and reporting. The experts recommended the transplant service continues to operate while these improvements are made.

To support ongoing sustainability and improvement, a five-year plan was recommended for the Heart and Lung Transplant Service. The experts also recommended governance changes to better integrate with partner services in the hospital.

Staffing and Resources

Overall, the experts noted the service resources need to be matched to clinical demand and complexity of care and recommended additional specialist medical, surgical, nursing, and allied health staffing in the transplant unit and associated clinical units to support the complex care of patients in the lead up to, during

and post-transplant, and to support growth, rostering, and sustainability. The report also recommends new training programs, staffing models and models of care be considered, including use of hospital-in-the-home where appropriate, to create capacity and sustainability in the service.

Staff Wellbeing

In relation to staff wellbeing, the experts recommended an increased focus on workplace strategies and processes that support a 'zero tolerance' approach to behaviours that do not promote a positive workplace culture. Staff should also be encouraged to access the employee assistance program and other wellbeing support programs if required.

Our Commitment

Metro North Health and The Prince Charles Hospital (TPCH) thank the independent expert panel team for undertaking this work in a sensitive and consultative manner, ensuring the experiences of staff and consumers are considered with the broad goal of ensuring the availability of leading transplant services for the people of Queensland.

We recognise that there are many improvements to be made, especially within our Heart Transplant Service and that some will require immediate action. The outcomes of this benchmarking exercise and the recommendations are not taken lightly.

We want all patients and consumers of TPCH's Heart and Lung Transplant Services to feel safe and fully supported when they are with us, and for their families and carers to be confident they will receive the best possible care. Similarly, all staff in the unit and in associated services should feel respected and supported in the workplace and to ensure the best patient outcomes.

Metro North acknowledges staff of the Heart and Lung Transplant Services at TPCH are committed to driving positive change to support the continued delivery of safe, high quality transplant services for the people of Queensland, adopting the latest technologies and research methodologies to help position the service at the forefront of transplant care.

Sustainability of this critical service is the priority. Metro North Health will develop a five-year plan for the Heart and Lung Transplant Service. This will be a collaborative process with clinicians and consumers, ensuring the lived experience of transplantation is at the forefront of this work as well as the operationalisation of the Heart Lung Institute. Some recommendations will require broader consultation and collaboration across Metro North Health and the Department of Health.

A Steering Committee will oversee development and implementation of an action plan to address the recommendations including priority areas, with clinical and lived experience membership to drive these improvements. The plan will include immediate, short- and long-term actions to ensure adherence by all staff to clinical processes and governance, and to address training, staffing and resourcing needs.

The experts have noted behaviours which do not meet expectations and there will be appropriate processes to address these and to support the teams to create a more supportive and collaborative working environment.

Some improvements will take time and we ask that all staff move forward in the spirit of teamwork, respect, compassion, high performance and integrity, to ensure that while these improvements are made staff are supported and that staff and patient wellbeing remains the priority.