

STRONG LEADERSHIP THE KEY TO MANAGING COVID-19 RISKS



While much has been written and spoken about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Australia and how it has been managed in the community, far less has been written or spoken about the significant challenges faced by the corrections industry.

A review of The GEO Group's operations in Australia during 2020 would identify the pandemic as a dominating factor. The responses adopted by GEO's General Managers and Health Services Managers — and their teams in NSW and Victoria and the resulting outcomes — are regarded as some of the most noteworthy achievements for our organisation in many years.

Our General Managers — Scott Brideoake in NSW and Natalie Greenfield and Col Caskie in Victoria — provided strong leadership and direction to their staff, but it is the resilience of our Health Services Managers and Health Teams that also warrants acknowledgment. While the General Managers were well supported by their respective Senior Leadership Teams during what

was a difficult year, the Health Service Managers rallied their staff to ensure proper infection control protocols were in place at each site.

GEO's Director Health Services, David Grace PSM, is also to be commended on his outstanding leadership during this exacting period. David provided support and guidance to Health Services Managers, including providing infection control refresher training for all staff and the execution of various policy requirements that were required by respective corrections departments - who in turn, were guided by the health authorities in each State. In Victoria, and following a second wave of transmission

"I am extremely proud of the resilience of our Health Services Managers and personnel across each of our sites and their unfailing commitment to keeping staff and prisoners safe".

of COVID-19, the resulting restrictions that were implemented at Ravenhall and Fulham Correctional Centres were the most severe in the country.

GEO's December 2020 Clinical Governance Committee Workshop was held in Sydney and provided the Health Services Managers and Clinical Coordinators an opportunity to debrief on what had been a difficult 10 months within a testing environment. The group was positive about learnings from the experience and said reflecting on the period has provided them with insights of 'best practice' for infection control.

Most important for the group was the acknowledgment of the power of working as a team — at the Centres, with Corporate Office and across the correctional system at State level.

Kim Blinkhorn

Director Governance and Continuous Improvement



Fulham Correctional Centre staff (L- R): Katie Hudson, Medical Administration Support Officer; Dr Geoffrey Brown, Dentist; Georgie Tyler, Registered Nurse; Julie Bond, Health Services Manager; Natalie Greenfield, General Manager; Craig Stewart, A/Operations Manager.

ROBUST CLINICAL GOVERNANCE GUIDES GEO'S HEALTH SERVICES

By David Grace

Director Health Services



GEO National Clinical Governance Committee: Left to Right: Maureen Hanly (Consultant), Dr Richard Matthews AM (Consultant), Mel Bliss (June CC Clinical Quality Coordinator), Jan Te Maru (June CC Health Services Manager), Kim Blinkhorn (Director, Governance and Continuous Improvement), Julie Bond (Fulham CC Health Services Manager), Shona Smith (Fulham CC Clinical Quality Coordinator), David Grace PSM (Director Health Services).

When visiting a doctor's surgery or hospital in the community, we all want to be assured the care being provided is safe, contemporary and personalised for our needs. The same can be said for health services provided in our correctional centres — that we expect services to be equivalent to, although not necessarily the same as what can be accessed in the community.

GEO provides primary health services at both Fulham and June CC Correctional Centres and maintains contractual oversight for primary health and forensic mental health services delivered at Ravenhall Correctional Centre. Between these sites, over 240 full-time equivalent health professionals are employed to meet the health care needs of around 2700 prisoners.

Health services delivered at GEO facilities must meet a set of health care standards equivalent to those expected of community-based health care providers. While the standards applicable at each correctional centre are marginally different and based on the specific jurisdictional requirements, all standards require health services to be underpinned by strong clinical governance processes — ensuring they meet the expectations of people in our care, and our client.

So, what is clinical governance?

Clinical governance reflects assurance that controls, systems and processes are in place to ensure health services delivery is safe, contemporary and consistent with the needs of the patient. It involves:

- setting health policy and direction;
- ensuring treatment and procedures used are contemporary and 'best-practice';
- continually monitoring performance through regular audits and reviews;
- ensuring health services comply with health-related legislation;
- promoting a culture of safety and continuous quality improvement;
- learning from incidents and complaints;
- identifying and acting upon clinical risk;
- ensuring the health workforce is appropriately qualified and trained;
- promoting a culture of open disclosure when things go wrong;
- establishing systems and processes to keep accurate health records;

- ensuring services meet specific needs for patients with additional health issues; and
- ensuring services are sensitive to specific cohorts, such as Indigenous and culturally diverse patients and those with disabilities.

In Australia, GEO's clinical governance is the responsibility of Director Governance and Continuous Improvement Kim Blinkhorn and myself as Director Health Services. Evidence shows that using multi-disciplinary teams to enact clinical governance generally brings about better results than when it relies solely on one, or two individuals. To take advantage of the variety of skills and expertise GEO staff offer, the National Clinical Governance Committee includes our Health Services Managers — Julie Bond and Jan Te Maru, and our Clinical Quality Coordinators — Mel Bliss and Shona Smith.

The National Clinical Governance Committee is also supported by Clinical Advisor Maureen Hanly (Chair) and Medical Advisor Dr Richard Matthews AM — consultants who bring a wealth of experience to the team through careers at senior levels within the NSW Justice Health & Forensic Mental Health Network and private health systems.

Our correctional centres also have a local Health Services Safety & Quality Committee. These committees are integral to GEO's clinical governance process and aim to ensure each Centre's performance is compliant with contractual and jurisdictional requirements, and GEO's national health policies. The committees are chaired by myself with membership routinely consisting of the General Manager, Health Services Manager, Clinical Quality Coordinator, Senior Medical Officer, Allied Health Representative, and Contract and Performance Managers.

GEO's clinical governance processes are fundamental to ensuring its health services are safe, contemporary and meeting the health needs of the prisoners in all GEO correctional centres.

NEW NALOXONE PROGRAM INTRODUCED TO PREVENT OPIOID OVERDOSE

By David Grace

Director Health Services



GEO taking a lead role in providing the education to the prisoners on the benefits and use of Naloxone.

The *Naloxone on Release* information and education session is normally provided to all interested prisoners following a structured Release-related Harm Reduction program session. This way, the prisoners are already contemplating how they can reduce risk to themselves in a structured and supported environment.

The information about *Naloxone on Release* is a natural progression of this, in thinking about reducing the risk while in prison to reducing their risk post-release.



According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017), more people in Australia die from drug overdose each year than traffic accidents. Opioid (eg Heroin, Fentanyl, Oxycodone, etc) overdose is also a significant risk to the lives of people who choose to recommence opioids after their release from prison. Regular opioid users usually need to significantly increase their dose over time to experience the same effect. Using the same dose, post-release, as their pre-prison dose can often have lethal consequences.

New program at Ravenhall Correctional Centre

On 1 February 2021, Ravenhall Correctional Centre implemented a *Naloxone on Release* program. The program aims to train pre-released prisoners to prevent, recognise and respond to opioid overdose. The program can save lives by providing released prisoners a Naloxone nasal inhaler which contains the antidote to opioid overdose.

Naloxone is a safe medication which only reverses the effects of opioids. The medication is distributed to prisoners upon release after a medical prescription and specific training in its use is made available.

The implementation of the *Naloxone on Release* program at Ravenhall was a collaboration between the GEO Rehabilitation & Reintegration team and the Centre's health care providers, Correct Care and Forensicare, with

"The program can save lives by providing released prisoners a Naloxone nasal inhaler which contains the antidote to opioid overdose".

Those prisoners who have participated in the education program and are interested in receiving *Naloxone on*

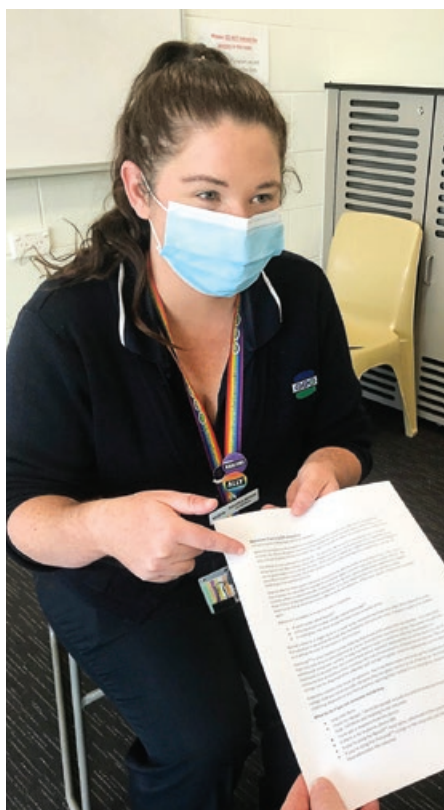
Release, provide consent. This allows the health care team to arrange a prescription and the pharmacy to include the medication in the prisoner's discharge medication pack. Processes have also been established for health care providers to facilitate training directly to high-risk prisoners who may not have initially expressed an interest in participating in the program, but may have reconsidered as part of the discharge planning process.

Staff training sessions

The GEO Rehabilitation & Reintegration team also provides train-the-trainer sessions for health care staff to ensure consistent training is provided to prisoners on its use.

June Correctional Centre was the first location to implement a similar program, with Fulham Correctional Centre likely to follow in the near future. While still early days, the response rate by prisoners to the program is encouraging.

The *Naloxone on Release* program is another way GEO is supporting prisoners, post-release, as part of its Continuum of Care® model.



Clinician Ashten Parry at Ravenhall Correctional Centre.

GEO'S HEALTH SERVICES ACTION PLAN

By *Kim Blinkhorn*

Director Governance and Continuous Improvement

Following a Clinical Governance Committee Workshop held in January 2021, the group commenced development of an **Action Plan** – which is reflective of the most significant issues that are presenting for health services and informed by various reviews, Coroner's recommendations, research of contemporary issues affecting health provision and best practices in health care. The group's collaboration resulted in five key areas of focus over the next three years.

The desired outcomes for the **Action Plan** include:

- **Health services models that deliver health outcomes aligned to best practice standards, clinical governance requirements and contractual obligations;**
- **GEO attracts, recruits and retains its full staffing complement through appealing employment packages and professional development opportunities;**
- **Health services that support and promote improvements in health outcomes for Aboriginal patients;**
- **Mitigate and manage risks associated with chronic diseases and/or obesity; and**
- **Implement health services delivery improvements, enhancements and innovations by implementing at least one value added new initiative per quarter.**

GEO's Health Services **Action Plan** has been developed in consultation with the respective state-based correctional health services, who are encouraging of the specific goals GEO has set for itself, recognising these issues remain significant across most correctional jurisdictions within Australia.



Health check at Junee Correctional Centre.



Health Centre facilities
at Fulham
Correctional Centre.

