



Charles Sturt
University

Student-led Podiatry clinic at Westside Community Centre: Final Report of the pilot project

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Executive summary

The student-led podiatry clinic at [Westside Community Centre](#) in West Albury, NSW was funded as a one-year pilot project by the NSW Department of Health through Three Rivers Department of Rural Health (DRH). Westside Community Centre provides case management and support services to the local community, to encourage connection and social inclusion. The centre has an important role in facilitating outreach services to enable community members' access to a range of services, including healthcare providers. The local community includes a strong First Nations population which is almost twice the national average and 25% of community members are over 65 years of age (abs.gov.au). With a significant number of people in the lower socioeconomic demographic, the community is impacted by poor health. In response to meeting community needs for allied health services, the staff at Westside embraced the opportunity to collaborate with the podiatry team at Charles Sturt to co-develop an on-site podiatry clinic.

Podiatry services to the community address all five of the health promotion and prevention activities which encourage healthy environments, communities and behaviours to:

- lessen predisposing factors for chronic conditions through improved environmental and social conditions, and reduce the development of behavioural and biomedical risk factors (primordial prevention);
- prevent the occurrence, or delay the onset, of chronic conditions (primary prevention);
- minimise or prevent disease progression in people with chronic conditions (secondary prevention);
- reduce the risk of developing additional chronic conditions, complications and/or associated disabilities (tertiary prevention);
- support improved quality of life; and
- reduce demand on the health care system

(Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2017).

The pilot project enabled delivery of a weekly podiatry service to the local community from 12 July 2021 – 27 June 2022, and clinical placements for final year podiatry students as part of their workplace learning experience. 149 scheduled appointments generated 121 individual treatment episodes (81.2% attendance rate) and 140 community workplace learning hours were made available to podiatry students.

This student-led podiatry service has been acknowledged through a RED Excellence [award](#) in 2021 for 'Vibrant Regional Communities' and also via a Community Recognition Statement delivered by Mr Justin Clancy MP, Member for Albury to the NSW Legislative Assembly on 22 February 2022.

The demonstrated success of this student-led clinic has generated a \$30,385 contract from Murray Primary Health Network (PHN) to enable continuation of podiatry service delivery at Westside for a further one-year period, 18 July 2022 – 30 June 2023.

Continuing support for this student-led podiatry clinic enables sustainability of an essential service to members of the Westside community who commonly have limited resources and would otherwise not have the means to access a podiatry service in Albury. Podiatrists are specialists in foot and lower limb health and as such, have a key role in primary healthcare in maintaining the mobility, physical activity, and independence of people in the community. Physical inactivity is a major risk factor for chronic conditions and premature death. A focus on prevention through adequate provision of podiatry services 'can significantly reduce the volume and severity of chronic conditions and provide long-term cost savings and better health outcomes' (Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2017).

Additionally, through this outreach clinic, workplace learning provides podiatry students with the opportunity to work with First Nations clients, to deepen their understanding of building relationships to foster culturally safe practice. Building capacity in allied health to create a culturally safe health workforce, is a key tenet of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health [Strategy](#) (AHPRA, 2020).

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Establishment of the student-led podiatry service

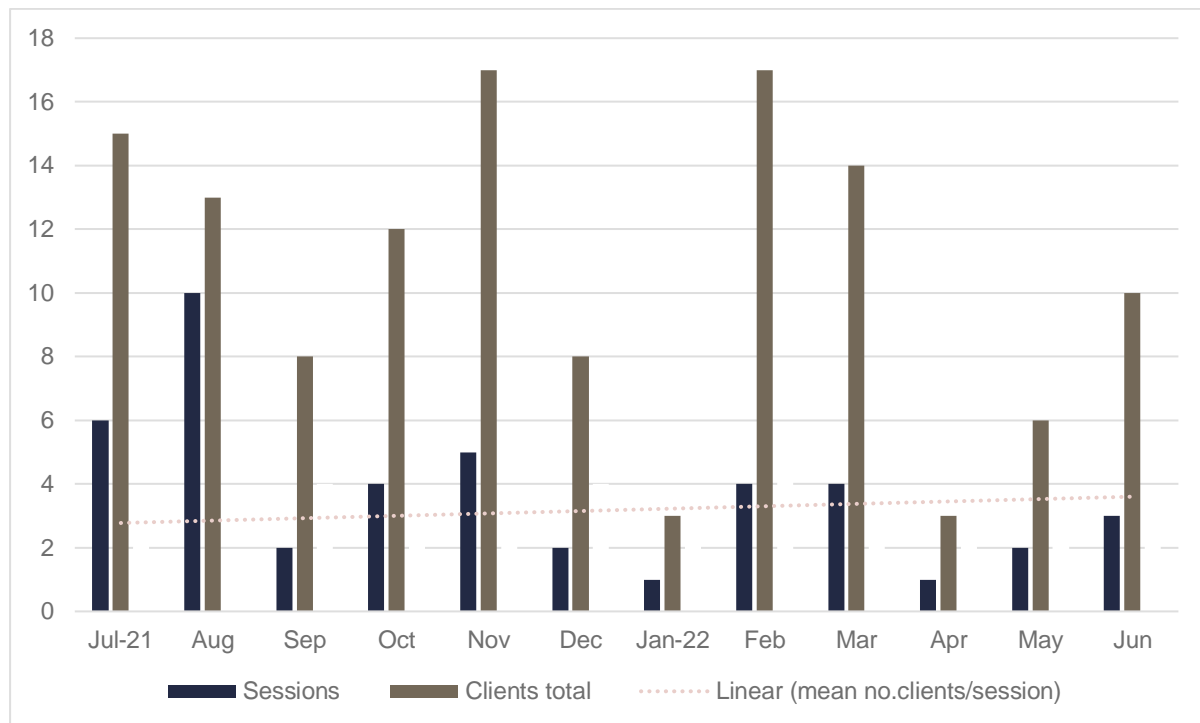
The seed funding of \$30,000 enabled the delivery of a podiatry service at Westside Community Centre (WCC) for a trial period of 12 months (July 2021 – June 2022). During this period, evaluation data has been collated to inform a funding submission which will enable continuity of service provision. The seed funding enabled the employment of a registered podiatrist as a sessional podiatry educator; the installation of podiatry equipment in a dedicated clinical room at WCC, the purchase of ten sets of podiatry instruments, a dedicated laptop computer with a licence for 'FrontDesk' software, and an adequate supply of podiatry consumables.

An initial induction to the WCC was facilitated on 23 June 2021 for final year podiatry students commencing placement at Westside. A subsequent induction was held on 18 October 2021 for the next cohort of students scheduled for this workplace learning experience. Similar induction sessions were scheduled for commencing final year students in 2022. These sessions provided an opportunity for students to understand the history of the centre, its value to the local community, and the population demographic. Also, this induction opportunity enabled WCC staff to address workplace health and safety issues with the students.

Final year podiatry students worked under direct supervision of the podiatry educator on a 1:1 basis. During the 12-month trial period 12 July 2021 to 27 June 2022, a total of 149 scheduled appointments generated 121 individual treatment episodes (81.2% attendance rate).

Figure 1 illustrates the number of clients receiving treatment each month. The progressive increase in the mean number of clients is an important indicator of the decline in number of clients who did not attend their appointment.

Figure 1: Number of client treatments



Booking process and eligibility assessment for My Aged Care

Bookings for the podiatry clinic were made by the WCC staff. For this pilot project, a client was required to meet the following eligibility criteria: aged 50 years or over; with a residential address local to the Westside Community Centre; and be a Health Care Card holder. At the time of booking, clients are assessed against the My Aged Care (MAC) eligibility criteria and referrals are made accordingly.

Registration with My Aged Care provides an entry point for the general public to Australian Government-funded aged care services. This assessment process, conducted at WCC, is important to identify people in the community who are living with chronic disease and unmet healthcare needs. Additionally, early evidence indicates that this support provided within a trusted and safe environment, is helpful to engage clients in taking responsibility for managing their health¹. At the end of each month, a list of MAC registration numbers was forwarded to the Charles Sturt University on-campus clinic (CEW), for inclusion in the activity report for Albury-Wodonga Health.

¹ For example, a woman who had previously disengaged from WCC and healthcare services, booked a podiatry appointment and subsequently scheduled her COVID-19 vaccination.

Client profile

Client data were collected from each person during their podiatry appointment and collated in an Excel spreadsheet. Each client's clinical record number is an identifier and data was stored securely on a password-protected computer, accessed by the supervising podiatrist, the podiatry students and the project lead. During this pilot project, 44 clients (31 women and 13 men) attended for podiatry treatment (Table 1). The mean age of clients was 64.4 years and 22% of clients identified a First Nations background.

Table 1: Demographic information

	Individual clients	Age range (mean) (years)	Identify as First Nations	CALD
Women	31	47 – 90 (59.3)	9 (29%)	1 (0.03%)
Men	13	40 – 80 (69.4)	3 (23%)	1 (0.07%)

CALD = clients who identified with a culturally and linguistically diverse background

NOTE: one woman aged 47 and one man aged 40 received podiatry services (did not meet inclusion criteria based on age)

A total of 149 scheduled appointments generated 121 individual treatment episodes. Table 2 illustrates the proportion of scheduled appointments which were not attended.

Table 2: Treatment episodes and attendance

	Attended for treatment	Did not attend	Total
Women	93 (80.1%)	23 (19.8%)	116
Men	28 (84.8%)	5 (15.2%)	33
	121 (81.2%)	28 (18.8%)	149

Tables 3 & 4 and Figures 2 & 3 provide insight to the health status of this population, in relation to the National Health Priority Areas (NHPAs).

Table 3: Prevalence of chronic disease in this population

NHPA (chronic disease)	Women	Men	Proportion of clients identifying as First Nations
Cardiovascular disease	27 (87.1%)	3 (53.8%)	9 (75%)
Mental health	16 (51.6%)	4 (30.8%)	4 (33.3%)
Arthritis	11 (35.5%)	3 (23%)	2 (16.7%)
Diabetes	5 (16.1%)	2 (15.4%)	4 (33.3%)
Obesity	5 (16.1%)	0	2 (16.7%)
Asthma	4 (12.9%)	2 (15.4%)	2 (16.7%)
Injury	2 (6.5%)	0	0

Cancer	1 (3.2%)	0	0
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Figure 2: Prevalence of chronic disease

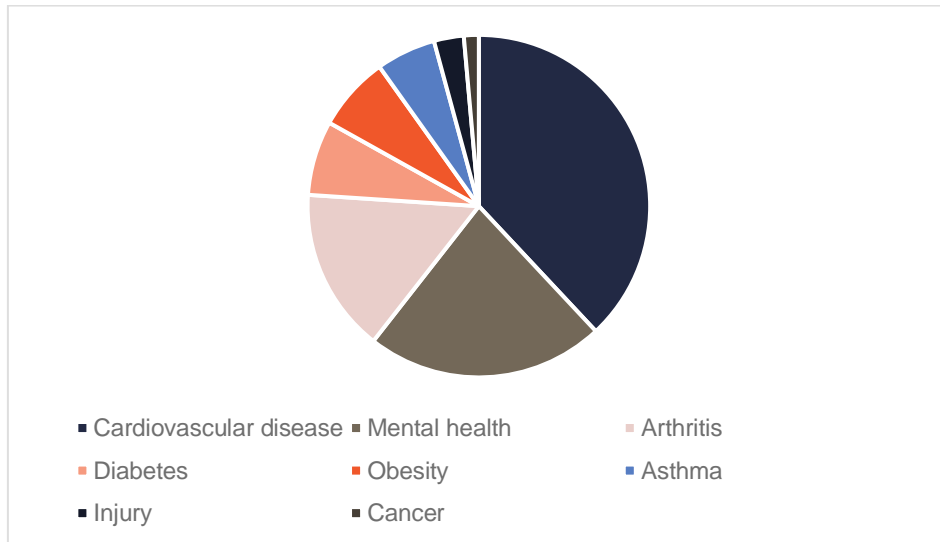
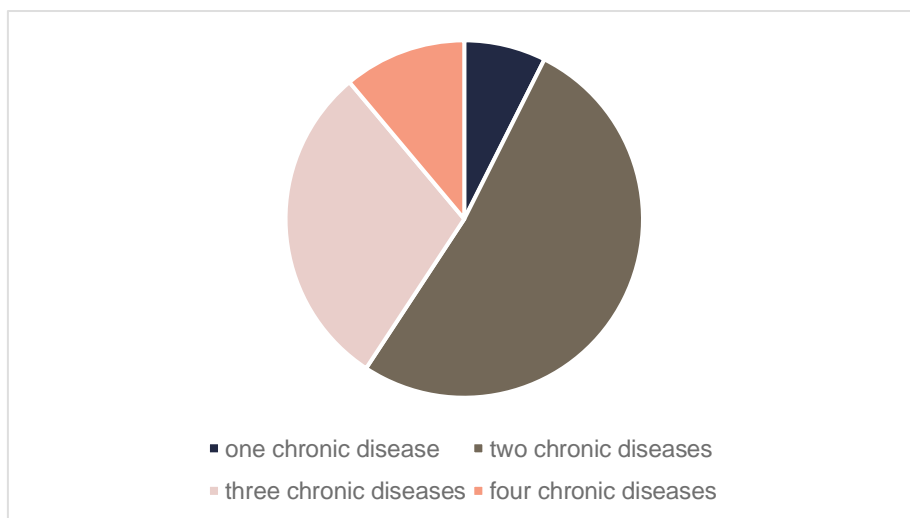


Table 4: Burden of chronic disease in this population

Number of NHPA chronic diseases	Women	Men	Proportion of clients identifying as First Nations
1	2 (6.5%)	0	1 (8.3%)
2	14 (48.4%)	5 (38.5%)	3 (25%)
3	8 (25.8%)	3 (23%)	5 (41.7%)
4	3 (9.7%)	0	1 (8.3%)

Figure 3: Chronic disease burden



Clients attending the podiatry clinic do so for a variety of reasons relating to their foot health. The data presented in Tables 5 & 6 and in Figure 4, illustrates the clients' podiatry needs and foot health concerns.

Table 5: Primary reason for seeking podiatry care

General podiatry care	Biomechanics	Orthoses	Wound care	Diabetes	Nail surgery
32 (70.5%)	12 (27.3%)	0	0	0	0

Table 6: Secondary reason for seeking podiatry care

General podiatry care	Biomechanics	Orthoses	Wound care	Diabetes	Nail surgery
9 (20.5%)	4 (9.1%)	2 (4.5%)	0	2 (4.5%)	2 (4.5%)

Figure 4: Primary and secondary reasons for clients seeking podiatry care

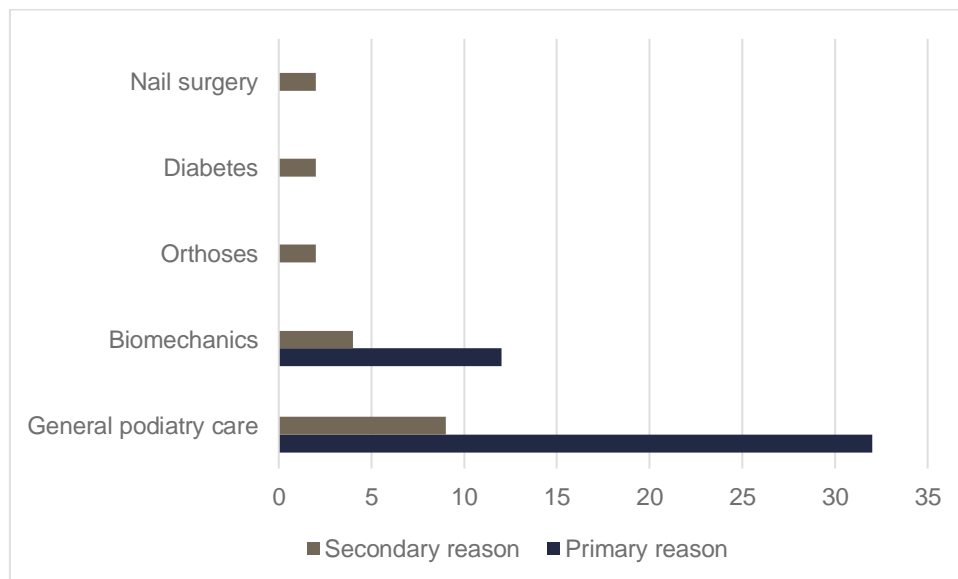
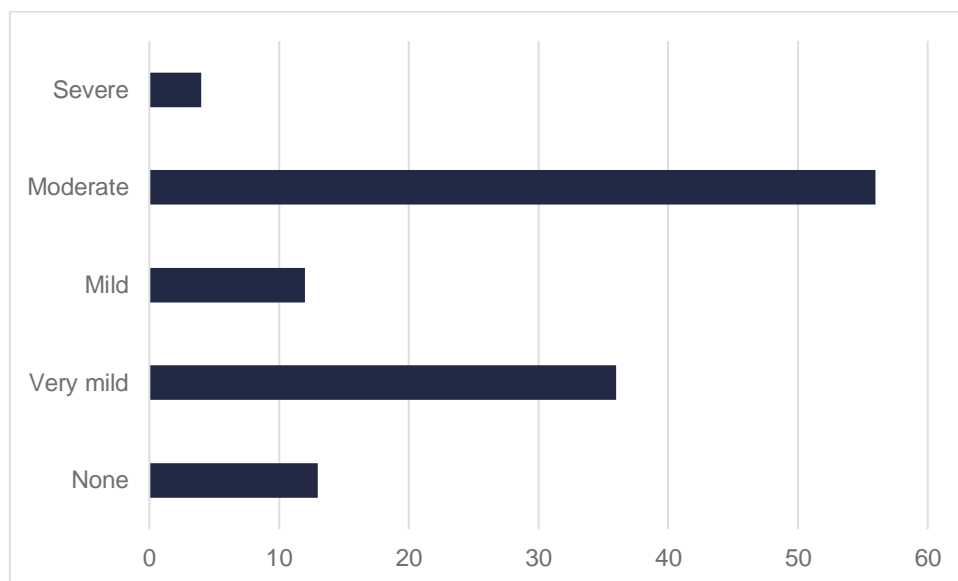


Table 7 and Figures 5, 6 & 7 illustrate data relating to foot discomfort and the impact on general activity and walking. This data relates to the 121 individual treatment episodes, rather than individual clients.

Table 7: Foot health status

Level of foot pain in the past week	None	Very mild	Mild	Moderate	Severe
Number of clients =	13	36	12	56	4
Feet caused difficulties with activity in the past week	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
Number of clients =	8	34	77	1	1
Foot health limits walking	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
Number of clients =	23	28	69	0	1

Figure 5: Level of foot pain in the past week



Clients receiving podiatric services at WCC reported foot pain ranging from very mild to severe. The most highly endorsed level of foot pain was moderate.

Figure 6: Feet caused difficulties with activity in the past week

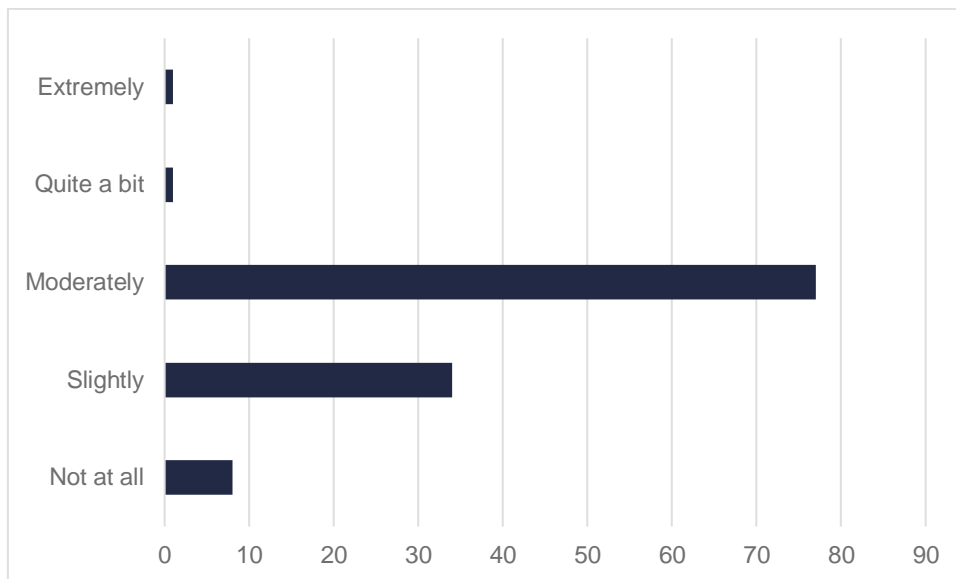
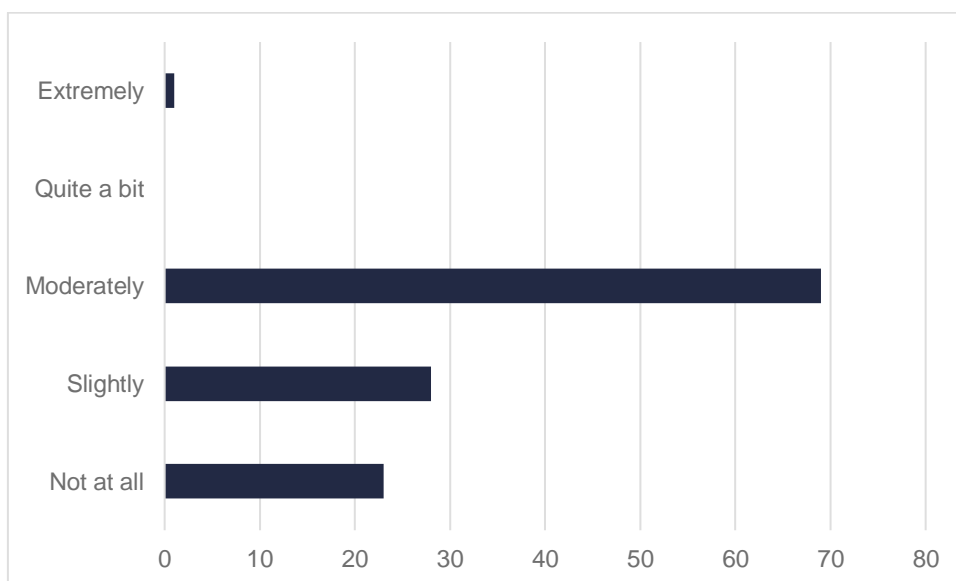


Figure 7: Foot health limits walking



Clients receiving podiatric services at WCC reported a range of impacts on daily activities including limits to walking. A large proportion of clients reported moderate impacts on activity/walking.

Access to podiatry and related services

Clients were asked about their access to podiatry services. Of the 29 clients who provided a response, 10 (34.4%) stated that they would not have access to a podiatry service if they were not able to attend the Westside Community Centre for treatment.

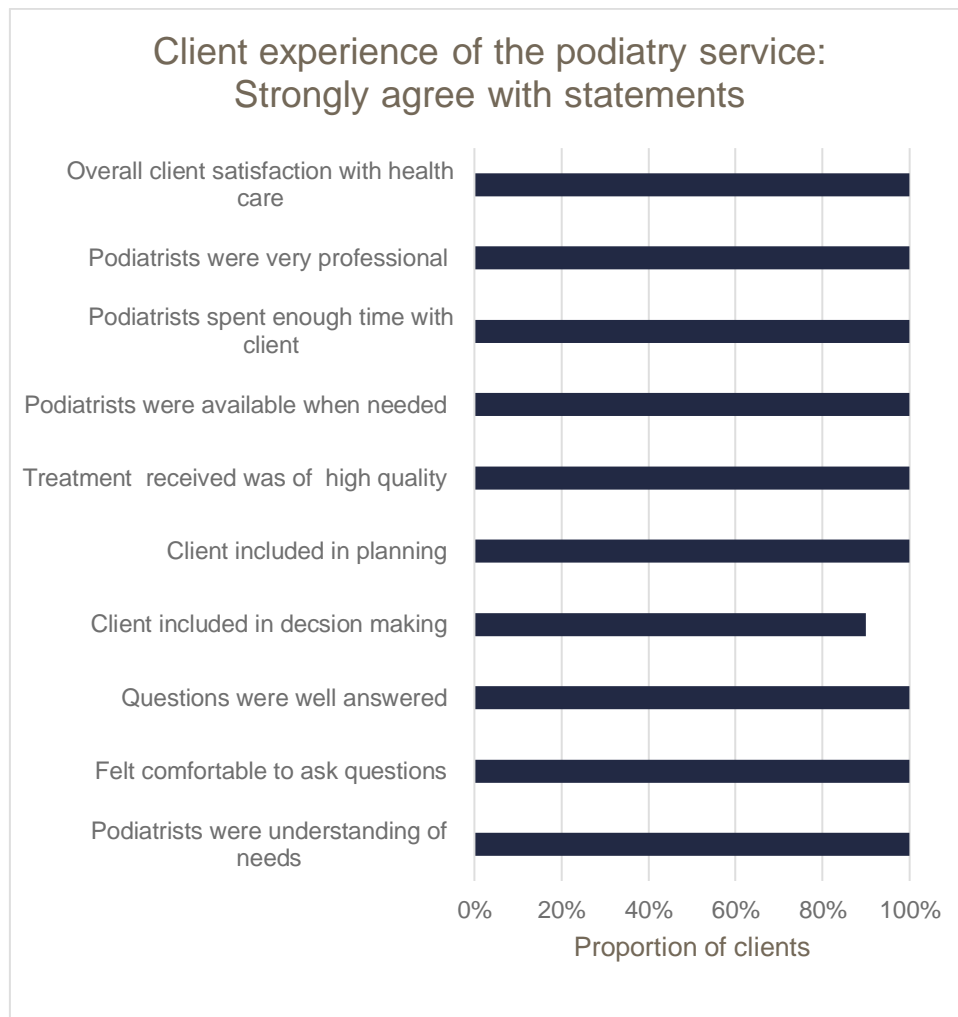
Podiatry students and clinical educator referred eight clients to another health service to support access to the local Falls Clinic, Charles Sturt on-campus podiatry clinic, Riverina Podiatry, radiography and other specialists (e.g. neurologist). Podiatry students and clinical educator also shared (with permission) foot health information with usual care providers (AWAHS, GP, Riverina Podiatry Group) for 13 clients to improve continuity of care. Outreach clinics (such as this) have a unique role in linking people who may have traditionally experienced systemic barriers to healthcare access, into a range of healthcare providers. This has the potential to prevent disease progression in people with chronic conditions and reduce the risk of developing additional chronic conditions, complications and/or associated disability.

Patient (client) experience and satisfaction survey

Clients attending the WCC podiatry service were invited to complete an anonymous and confidential survey including questions on their experience and satisfaction (Appendix 1). Twelve clients returned completed surveys

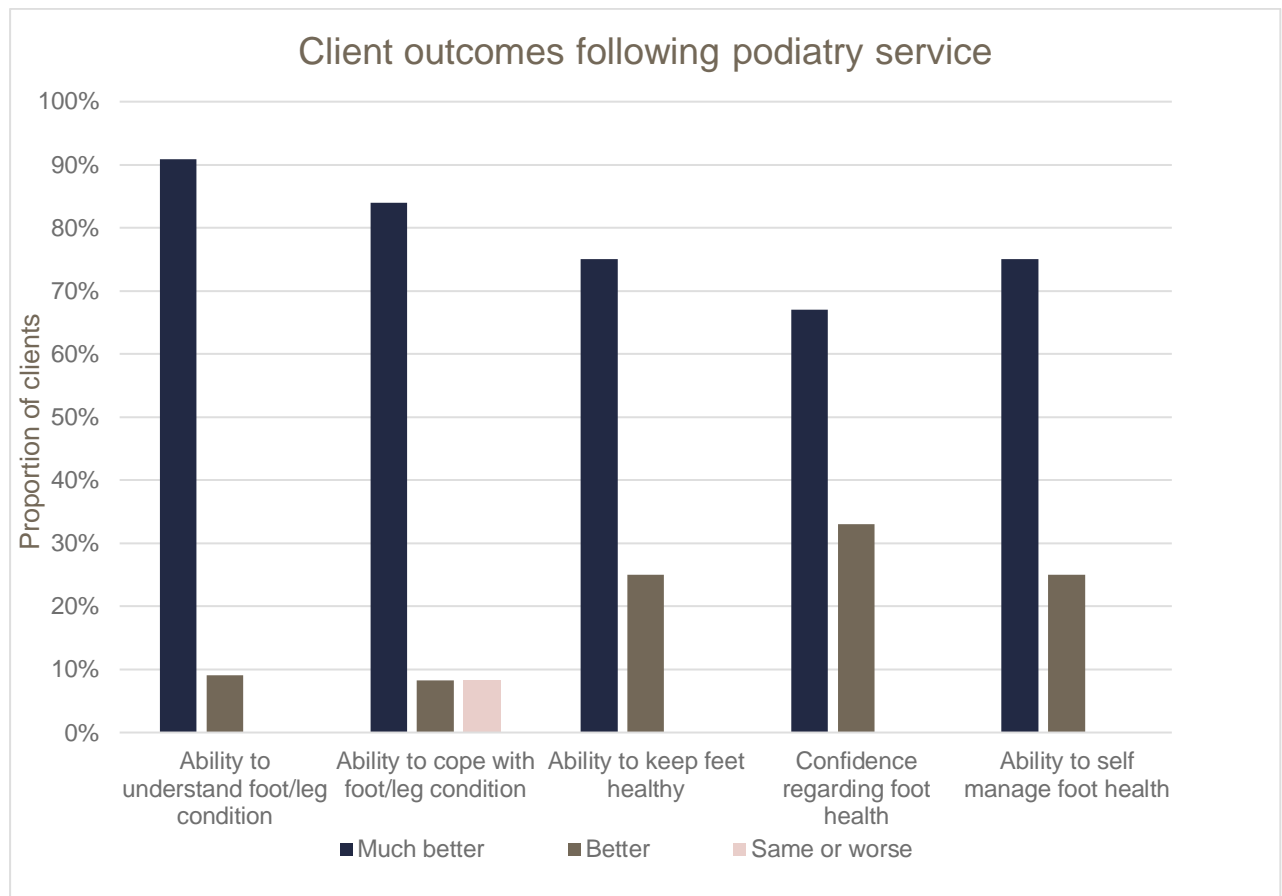
Clients “strongly agreed” with each client experience statement (Figure 8), indicating an overwhelmingly positive experience. All clients (100%) reported that the podiatrist and podiatry student were professional and understanding of their needs; spent enough time with them and were available when needed; and felt comfortable asking questions, and that these questions were well answered. All clients (100%) reported feeling included in planning and most clients (90%) reported being included in decision making. All clients (100%) reported receiving high quality treatment and being satisfied with the health care provided to them.

Figure 8: Client responses to individual 'experience' statements



In addition to client experience, clients were asked to rate their self-perceived ability to understand and cope with their foot condition; and their ability and confidence to maintain foot health. Responses are presented in Figure 9. Most clients (85%-90%) reported better or much better understanding and ability to cope with their foot/leg condition. All clients (100%) reported better or much better ability and confidence to manage their foot health.

Figure 9: Client responses to individual 'outcome' statements



Cultural safety

Of the twelve returned surveys, two clients identified as Aboriginal, two clients preferred not to answer this questions, and eight clients did not identify as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. All clients (100%) reported that staff genuinely respected their cultural values and practices, no clients (0%) reported feeling unfairly treated because of their race or culture. All clients who completed surveys reported they would be extremely likely to recommend the service to others.

Client feedback

Clients were invited to provide open feedback at the completion of the survey. Clients have been very willing to provide written feedback about the podiatry service at Westside. This feedback demonstrates the achievement of staff and students in creating a highly valued, culturally safe, and responsive podiatry service to the local community.

'Good to have the service here – respect CSU for coming here. Really grouse [sic] service' (non-indigenous client).

'I was very happy with the care I received from the trainee, who was overseen by the podiatrist. Thank you for looking after my feet' (Aboriginal client).

'These podiatrists are amazing. I was made to feel comfortable and they explained everything in ways you can understand. I have never felt that I could trust people with my feet but I was wrong because these ladies are great at their job. I will definitely recommend these podiatrists to all of my friends and family – thanks for a great experience. I am so glad that they are at Westside Community Centre because for a lot of people like me, [we] feel extremely safe there (non-indigenous client).

'The treatments are wonderful, and I am very happy with this service. I hope that it will continue in the future' (Aboriginal client).

'Both senior and junior (students) podiatrists have been very kind and helpful (non-indigenous client).

'Very well looked after, gentle, professional. Service was first class. Very professional, thoughtful, caring. Highly recommend to friends' (Aboriginal client).

'I have recommended this service to several friends and they are all very impressed with the service, as I am. We all hope this service continues' (non-indigenous client).

'I would like to thank the Charles Sturt Podiatry Team for providing an excellent, professional, and affordable service. I was referred to the clinic through the outreach service provided at the Westside Community Service at West Albury. Without the service, my daughter and I would not have been aware of what CSU could offer us' (non-indigenous client).

'Excellent service with professional communication between the student and educator in assessing my concerns. I LOVE WESTSIDE PODIATRY!! I would like to see Charles Sturt University/Logo and contact numbers provided on the client experience feedback/survey form. Date of client service is also necessary. When attending Albury CSU Podiatry, it would be beneficial to complete the survey whilst with student and then provide to educator upon completion. A six month reminder text may assist client to keep on top off their overall feet health' (non-indigenous client).

Clinical governance and monitoring and evaluation of the pilot project

Clinical governance and regular monitoring and evaluation of the podiatry service at WCC has been facilitated by the project lead, in collaboration with an advisory group. Meetings were scheduled once a month for the term of this project. Membership of this group comprised representation from:

Charles Sturt University Podiatry team

- Assoc Prof Caroline Robinson Project Lead and A/Head School of Allied Health, Exercise and Sports Science
- Cate Melville Podiatry Supervisor
- Emma Baker Assoc Lecturer in Podiatry and Podiatry Clinical Coordinator, CEW
- Dr Kristy Robson Senior Lecturer in Podiatry and Workplace Learning

Westside Community Centre

- Tracey Zani Manager, Westside Community Centre
- Stacey Franklin Family & Youth Program Co-ordinator – Case Manager, Westside Community Centre Coordinator

Three Rivers Department of Rural Health (DRH)

- Christine Howard Director, Three Rivers DRH
- Assoc Prof Mel Nott Principal Research Fellow, Three Rivers DRH
- Brent Smith Podiatrist and Lecturer in Rural Health, Three Rivers DRH

Community representative

- Jane Greig Community advocate

Podiatry student representative

- Chris Knoble 4th year Podiatry student

Alumni representative

- Jason Walker Graduate Podiatrist employed at Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Aboriginal Corporation

Instrument sterilisation, waste disposal and storage/transportation of consumables

Consumables are stored in lockable cupboards in the podiatry clinic room at WCC. No podiatry instruments are stored on site. Each week, the rostered student is responsible for transporting the consumables tub and packs of sterile instruments to WCC on Monday morning. At the end of the day, the same student is responsible for returning contaminated instruments to the university on-campus clinic (CEW) for cleaning and sterilisation. This student is also required to re-stock the consumables plastic tub from the main store in the CEW and ensure that packs of sterile instruments are ready for the following week's clinic. A sharps bin is stored in a lockable cupboard in the Westside clinical room. Contaminated waste is sealed securely in yellow bags and transported to the CEW for appropriate disposal.

Research planning

The conduct of this pilot project (Phase 1) was conducted in accordance with approved data collection, analysis, and dissemination process. Ethics review and approval was obtained from the Charles Sturt University HREC (Protocol number: H22044. Project title: Evaluation of a student-led podiatry clinic with Westside Community Centre).

The existing HREC approval also permits value-based cost analysis of the clinic. This will occur prior to the end of 2022.

The initial findings collected during Phase 1 and reported in this document will inform the development of a wider-reaching research project (Phase 2), to be co-designed with community to explore the value of this student-led podiatry clinic from the perspective of multiple stakeholders. This will be submitted to the AHMRC for HREC approval.

Sustainability plan

The demonstrated success of this student-led clinic has generated a \$30,385 contract from Murray Primary Health Network (PHN) to enable continuation of podiatry service delivery at Westside for a further one-year period, 18 July 2022 – 30 June 2023. The contract for 295 occasions of service/year will be met through scheduling podiatry clinics for one day/week for 41 weeks.

Consumer intake is to preference underserved, rural cohorts, who are not receiving funds for the same or similar service from a different funding source such as Commonwealth or State funding. The priority cohort to receive Services under this agreement are people with one or more of the following conditions:

- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Chronic Cardiovascular conditions (with a focus on chronic heart failure)
- Diabetes Mellitus

Future considerations

- Many of the Westside community members do not have a regular GP and therefore, gaining a comprehensive medical history can be challenging.
 - explore the potential opportunity to partner with Albury-Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service to enable a nurse practitioner to undertake health checks and My Aged Care assessments; and
 - investigate whether it is possible for the Albury-Wodonga Aboriginal Health Service health bus to visit Westside Community Centre.
- Potential opportunity for nursing/medical/pharmacy student placements at Westside Community Centre
 - Three Rivers DRH to consider the possibilities for expanding workplace learning at Westside Community Centre.

Appendix 1.

CLIENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY – WESTSIDE COMMUNITY CENTRE PODIATRY SERVICE

Thank you for completing this anonymous survey which will not identify you personally in any way. The questions will provide important information about your experience of the chronic disease management care at this service and help us to ensure continuous quality improvement.

How to fill in this survey

Most of the questions can be answered by placing a tick in the box next to the answer that best applies. Please tick only one answer for each question, unless otherwise directed.

Service attended:

Podiatry

Patient/ Client experience of the podiatry service:

Please respond to the following statements by ticking **one** box on each line:

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree	N/A
The podiatrist(s) were understanding of my personal health concerns						
I felt comfortable to ask the podiatrist questions						
My questions were answered well						
I was included in decision-making						
I was included in the planning of my care						
The treatment I received was of a high quality						
The podiatrist(s) were available when I needed them						
The podiatrist spent enough time with me						
The podiatrist(s) were very professional						
Overall, I was satisfied with my health care						

Patient / client outcomes:

As a result of receiving the service, do you feel you are:

	Same or less	Better or more	Much better or much more	Not applicable
a. Able to understand your condition				
b. Able to cope with your condition				
c. Able to keep yourself healthy				
d. Confident about your health				
e. Able to help yourself				

Cultural Safety

Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

- Aboriginal Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander
 Torres Strait Islander Prefer not to answer
 Both

Considering your visits... *(please circle response that is most applicable)*

1. Do you feel that staff at the service genuinely respect your cultural values and practices?

Always Sometimes Rarely Never Prefer not to answer Unsure

2. Have you felt unfairly treated at the service because of your race or cultural background?

Always Sometimes Rarely Never Prefer not to answer Unsure

3. On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely is it that you would recommend the health service to friends or family?

Not at all likely Extremely likely
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please provide any general feedback or comments about how we can improve our service *(avoid using names of individuals)*.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey