



Newsletter  
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## Fiona Stanley Fremantle Hospital Group Joins ClinTrial Refer in Western Australia



Government of **Western Australia**  
**South Metropolitan Health Service**

ClinTrial Refer is very pleased to welcome a new group of five hospitals in Western Australia from the South Metropolitan Health Service to our research community.

The South Metropolitan Health Service (SMHS) delivers hospital and community-based public health care services to a population of more than 657,800 within a catchment area stretching 3,300 square kilometers across the southern half of Perth and Western Australia. This catchment represents 25 per cent of the State's population.

The SMHS hospital network includes:

- Fiona Stanley Hospital

- Rockingham General Hospital
- Fremantle Hospital
- Murray District Hospital
- Peel Health Campus (public private partnership with Ramsey Health)

*"We are very excited to join the ClinTrial Refer App community to showcase our clinical trial capacity and capability, attract more participants and have an accessible information portal for our staff, referring clinicians and community members"* said **Melanie Wright, the Head of Research and Development for the South Metropolitan Health Service.**

*"We have a thriving clinical trials community in medical oncology, haematology, gastroenterology, diabetes and more. Clinical trials offer our patients the latest and greatest treatments, close supervision and increased monitoring with the aim of improving clinical outcomes and quality of life."*



Visit the SMHS - Fiona Stanley Fremantle Hospital Group on ClinTrial Refer or read more about SMHS Research [here](#).

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## Clinical Trial Spotlight: Focus on Teletrials



## What are Teletrials?

There is an increasing focus on teletrials in the design and implementation of clinical trials, especially recently in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities and health care systems around the world. So what are teletrials? Teletrials are an innovative patient-centred model of care that allows a larger number of people to have access to clinical trials, even if they live in regional, remote or rural areas. Clinical trial participation can extend life and improve a patient's quality of life. Trials provide participants with the opportunity to access new treatments, therapies and technologies. However, people in regional areas face several barriers to participating in clinical trials conducted in larger metropolitan centres, including travelling time, costs and social disruption. The use of telehealth technology such as videoconferencing, phones or other mobile devices can enable medical consultations to be done remotely in a relatively new model called teletrials.

A teletrial allows a clinician at a larger centre to use telehealth technology to enrol, consent and treat patients in clinical trials in partnership with trial staff at smaller regional and rural centres, allowing patients to participate in trials closer to home. Trial participants may have visits at both the larger centre and their local centre, or only at their local centre, depending on the type of trial. A group of sites operating under the teletrial model is called a teletrial cluster. The clinician at the larger centre remains responsible for the trial across the whole cluster and supervises the clinical trial staff at the local centre according to a detailed plan that ensures all participants receive the same standard of care in the trial.

In March 2021 the Australian Department of Health released the [National Teletrials Compendium](#) providing a new national policy and set of standard operating procedures for teletrials. The compendium has been agreed to by all states and territories and will help clinical researchers, healthcare organisations and trial sponsors in the implementation of teletrials across Australia.

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## Teletrials - Improving Access to Clinical Trials in Regional Australia

*by Dr Rob Zielinski*

Medical Oncologist, Central West Cancer Services

Director, Clinical Trials Unit, Orange Hospital NSW

Chair, Regional and Rural Executive Group, Clinical Oncology Society of Australia

I am writing this short piece from the regional city of Orange in Central West NSW as a passionate medical oncologist who really and truly enjoys participating in clinical trial research. I hope this small



piece inspires those yet to start clinical trial research and to reinvigorate those already doing research to continue their great work. I have seen firsthand the massive impact clinical trials have made on our Central West Cancer Centre and on our patients outcomes. My staff love the novelty of trials work and we all enjoy seeing the hope we provide patients who feel that there are no further therapies for their cancer.

Despite having a thriving cancer trial unit in Orange I still have too many patients who decline participation in a clinical trial open in Sydney or Canberra due to the massive burden of repetitive travel that is required to enrol. There is no way that any one clinical trial unit can offer all of their patients a relevant trial for their disease. How can we fix that problem?

Until recently, there has been little change in how we conduct clinical trials. Then, in 2018, the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia released and endorsed the **Australasian Teletrial model** which has been adopted across the country as a new, pragmatic approach to turbo charging clinical trial activity. In truth, however, it has been a slow, and at times challenging process to implement. It has required trial sponsors and organisations to change the way they run clinical trials. However, it resulted in trials placing the patient at the centre of the model and then identifying ways to decentralise the associated trial activity. I am pleased to report that there have been major inroads into deploying this Teletrial model across the country from Cairns in QLD down to Orange in Central West NSW and on to Albury/Wodonga on the Victorian border. There has been overwhelming support from all stakeholders which has been the most satisfying element to this process.



A view from the Pinnacle lookout over the city of Orange in Central West NSW

Now, we find ourselves at an important juncture in the maturation of Teletrials with the imminent launch of multiple state and national based projects funded by the **\$100 million Medical Research Future Fund Regional and Rural Clinical Trials grant**. This investment aims to predominantly assist states and territories to rapidly upscale the implementation of the Teletrials model across all diseases and all jurisdictions. This funding is truly a “once-in-a-generation” opportunity to embed clinical trials and the Teletrial model into Australian health practice. Finally, the regional and rural populations will be able to gain access to hundreds of trials with no or minimal travel. Australia will become a very attractive destination for large trial sponsors as we will be able to enrol more patients, more rapidly onto clinical trials. We will streamline the at times clunky ethics and governance processes so trials can be rapidly opened and expanded to multiple sites.

So the future for clinical trials in both regional and rural Australia and its towns and cities is looking decidedly brighter. I predict that over the next five years Teletrials will be the standard model used across the country. Patients no matter where they live will have much greater access to a clinical trial of a new or novel therapy for their health condition. Sponsors running trials will view Teletrials as a natural method to expand the reach of their experimental drugs or medical devices to vastly more patients. This will be needed more and more as the advancement of genomics results in human diseases being genomically broken into smaller and smaller groups of patients. Teletrials will offer researchers the ability to find these small groups of patients and more importantly enrol them in a clinical trial, as travel will no longer become the defining barrier to participation.

Trials being conducted by the Clinical Trials Unit at Orange Health Service can be viewed in the ClinTrial Refer Rural NSW App.



## ClinTrial Refer **Rural NSW**

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### **ClinTrial Refer Partnering to Improve Access to Innovative Healthcare Across NSW and ACT**

NSW Health has been awarded funding of \$30.6 million over five years from the Medical Research Future Fund – 2019 Rural, Regional and Remote Clinical Trial Enabling Infrastructure Grant scheme. The program proposed by NSW Health, along with 34 State and National partners across health, research, private and community sectors including ACT Health, will deliver increased and more equitable access to clinical trials for patients in rural, regional and remote NSW and ACT. NSW Health is planning to establish a network of up to three new regional clinical trial support units in 2021. These regional clinical trial support units will cover the northern, western, and southern NSW/ACT regions. ClinTrial Refer is participating as a program partner and will be collaborating to increase clinical trial awareness, engagement and recruitment in these regional communities.



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### **Conference Scholarship Opportunity for Health Consumers**

[ARCS Australia](#) is offering up to 20 scholarships for health consumers to attend the 2021 ARCS Annual Conference in June to better understand how the industry works, its challenges and opportunities, and to network with those developing the next generation of therapeutics. ARCS Australia is a non-profit member-based organisation providing professional development to the therapeutics industry (clinical research, regulatory, medical affairs and safety professionals working in non-commercial and commercial organisations). Each year, ARCS Australia holds a conference to provide attendees with an opportunity to share learnings, hear updates from relevant agencies and discuss the future of the industry. In 2021, the conference will be held at the International Convention Centre, Darling Harbour in Sydney on the 7-9 June. The theme of this year's conference is From pandemic to recovery – building Australia's competitive advantage post COVID.

If you are or know a patient, carer or other health consumer interested in attending, please submit an [expression of interest](#) to ARCS Australia by Friday 23 April, 5pm AEST.

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## Would you like to be an inspiration for someone?

Share your story if you have taken part in a clinical trial or supported someone through a trial. Your stories and thoughts are important to us and can be a great encouragement to others. If you'd like to share a clinical trial story please email us at [raheela@clintrialreferapp.com](mailto:raheela@clintrialreferapp.com). We'd love to hear from you.

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