

health

Rural and Isolated Practice
Endorsed Registered Nurses

Health Service support
Communication Strategy

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1. Introduction

This communication strategy has been drafted as a tool to assist rural and regional health services in communicating the presence of a Rural and Isolated Practice Endorsed Registered Nurse (RIPERN) at their facility. Communications should include engagement of local health services such as GP's, pharmacists and other health professionals in the local area.

This strategy is not designed to fit each and every health service and will require tailoring by each health service to fit individual needs.

2. Situation analysis

Rural health services sometimes lack the resources of a communications or public relations team to assist the service effectively communicate important changes within their service.

This communications strategy is a tool that those health services can use to assist them in communicating the role of a RIPERN within their service.

RIPERNS are nurses that have undertaken further education to allow them to administer and supply a small and controlled amount of medications without the prescription of a GP or health service doctor.

The medications that can be administered or supplied are for very general low risk conditions such as ear infections, small burns or tonsillitis.

Having a RIPERN on shift in a health service to provide urgent care can assist with treating patients quickly rather than having to call a local GP to the hospital and making the patient wait for treatment or having patient travel to see a doctor.

There are strict training and legislative controls on what a RIPERN can supply and administer and this is overseen by the Victorian Minister for Health. These medicines, the clinical circumstances for which they are used, and the health services in which they may be used, must be approved by the Minister for Health and are in the [Gazettal Approval](#).

3. Communication objectives

- To raise awareness of the presence of a RIPERN at a particular health service
- To educate target audiences about what a RIPERN can and can't do, how they can assist the community and how the role will improve outcomes for local patients
- To assure the community that the new RIPERN role will enhance access to high quality health care.
- Ensure messages about the RIPERN role are clear and consistent

4. Target audiences

The target audience may be different for each health service. A target audience is who you want and need to speak to in regard to your RIPERNS.

4.1 Primary

Professional

- GPs who are on call to the health service to provide urgent care
- Community pharmacists

General

- Health service staff
- Urgent care patients, their family and carers

4.2 Secondary

- Local community members
- Community allied health professionals
- Local MPs

5. Key messages

These are the succinct statements that should be included, or considered, in all communication with the target audience. Try and put yourself in the position of the audience and imagine how you might respond to these messages – this will help you decide whether the messages are relevant and worded appropriately. In most cases, five would be the maximum number of messages for one audience.

In some cases you may need to tailor individual messages to specific target audiences. The table below may assist you in presenting this. You may need to reword these messages for your local community, or you may need to add to this table, to address individual circumstances of your health service.

Key message	Target audience - All
The RIPERN role has been adopted in rural Victoria after broad consultation with the key stakeholders including the Australian Medical Association, Australian Nursing Federation, Australian Nursing Practitioner Association, Pharmacy Guild of Australia; the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, and the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia.	All
RIPERNS are educated formally and endorsed to supply medicines according to approved clinical guidelines.	All
The RIPERN is a new nursing role in Victoria that is supported by national and state legislation.	All
Communities in rural areas will now have even better access to care at their local hospitals with the new RIPERN role.	All
The RIPERN complements and supplements existing medical and nursing services.	All
The RIPERN model has been running successfully in Queensland for many years.	All

Key message	Target audience
The RIPERN can safely manage a limited number of patients who have non-life threatening conditions without needing to contact a doctor.	Primary Professional
The RIPERN works best in a collaborative practice model involving the other key players on the health care teams, including doctors, pharmacists, nurse practitioners and paramedics.	Primary Professional
RIPERNS will help reduce the call on doctors for non-urgent, low risk patient presentations.	Primary Professional
RIPERNS practice is the responsibility of their employing health service and will not increase the doctors' responsibility.	Primary Professional
Every patient that is supplied medicines by the RIPERN will receive current consumer information on that drug and may be followed-up by the nurse.	Primary Professional
All patients will be encouraged to arrange a follow-up appointment with their GP.	Primary Professional
The RIPERN is an advanced nursing role in rural Victoria. RIPERNS are able to manage the full episode of care of a limited number of non-complex patient conditions including those who may have infections and will require a course of antibiotics. In order for the RIPERNS to safely manage these patients, they may be required to order a limited range of pathology tests.	Primary Professional

Key message	Target audience
If you need a doctor, the RIPERN will arrange this.	Primary General
The RIPERN on duty will assess your clinical needs and arrange for you to see the most appropriate health professional.	Primary General
You are advised to make a follow-up appointment with your GP after seeing the RIPERN, who will also advise your GP of your presentation with your permission.	Primary General

6. Strategy

A poster is available to display in your facility to advise people that a RIPERN is employed at your health service.

It is up to each individual health service as to where, how and if they choose to display this poster. Some health services may choose to leave the poster on display at all times, others may choose to only display the poster whilst a RIPERN is on shift.

A set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and two Fact Sheets have also been developed for your use. Distribution of these will be the responsibility of the individual health service. You may choose to make these available in printed form, via a link on your website or via direct mail to local pharmacists and GP's if you choose.

These communication tools are available on the Department of Health website at:
<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth/>.

Other methods that could be used for communicating the role of your RIPERN include community engagement opportunities, media engagement and briefing all staff of the role that your RIPERN can play in improving service to patients at your health service.

7. Timelines

Project milestones and the corresponding key dates should be outlined in this section. Individual health services will need to complete this section if necessary.

8. Tools

Please tailor these to your health service. Below is a list of possible tools you can use to help communicate the role of your RIPERN.

8.1 Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

FAQs have been developed for the general public to provide easy to understand information about the RIPERN and their role in providing urgent care service in rural health services.

8.2 Fact sheets

Two fact sheets have been developed - [Information for health professionals](#) and [Information about Medicines Management by RIPERNS](#).

Distribution may be in hardcopy or via email.

8.3 Poster

A [poster](#) has been produced for use by health services.

8.4 Newsletter

Each health service could feature an article on their individual RIPERN. (If a newsletter is produced by your health service)

8.5 Website

Fact sheets, FAQs, the role of your RIPERN and any other information you would like to include about the RIPERNS role within your health service should be placed on your website. You could choose to dedicate a page to the RIPERN role.

8.6 Media engagement

By contacting your local newspaper, you may be able to discuss the possibility of a human interest article featuring your RIPERN.

If you need any assistance with media engagement please contact the Media Unit within the Department of Health.

Before you engage any media, please consider potential impacts on your urgent care usage. (Some health services may not want to draw extra attention to a RIPERN due to a potential increase or spike in patients)

IMPORTANT: The department's Media Unit (909 67516) is always the first point of contact for any departmental media liaison.

8.7 Stakeholder engagement / consultation

Stakeholder engagement and consultation is integral to the success of most projects.

It ensures key stakeholders understand, and in turn endorse, the project and its outcomes.

Please consider using any current community engagement groups your health service already has to discuss and educate on the role of your RIPERN.

8.8 Network

Engage with your Board and key stakeholders to inform or discuss with their networks the expanded service the RIPERN is bringing to the local community.

9. Budget

A budget to implement the strategy should be identified here. Each health service will need to fill this in individually.

10. Evaluation

Your health service may evaluate your communications activities regarding RIPERNS.

Below are a number of different ways you could evaluate your communications activity. Health services will need to tailor this to your needs and activities.

10.1 Surveys

Surveys can be emailed, posted on a website, conducted via telephone or face-to-face with consumers and or health professionals such as GP's, pharmacists and nurses.

10.2 Website hits

10.3 Increased participation

10.4 Media coverage

Attachment 1 — EXAMPLE ONLY — Action plan — For use by health service

Activity	Key messages	Target audience	Timing	Responsibility
Launch	<p>RIPERNs are educated formally and endorsed to supply medicines according to approved clinical guidelines.</p> <p>The RIPERN is a new nursing role in Victoria that is supported by national and state legislation.</p> <p>Communities in rural areas will now have even better access to care at their local hospitals with the new RIPERN role.</p> <p>The RIPERN complements and supplements existing medical and nursing services.</p> <p>The RIPERN model has been running successfully in Queensland for many years.</p>	All	At start-up	Director of Nursing Patient Liaison Coordinator RIPERN GP Community representative
Fact sheets	<p>The RIPERN can safely manage a limited number of patients who have non-life threatening conditions without needing to contact a doctor.</p> <p>The RIPERN works best in a collaborative practice model involving the other key players on the health care teams, including doctors, pharmacists, nurse practitioners and paramedics.</p> <p>RIPERNs will help reduce the call on doctors for non-urgent, low risk patient presentations.</p> <p>Every patient that is supplied medicines by the RIPERN will receive current consumer information on that drug and may be followed-up by the nurse.</p>	GPs Ambulance Victoria Paramedics Pharmacists Registered Nurses Community members	Distribute to stakeholders 3 months prior to planned start up with letter from CEO	CEO Director of Nursing
Website	<p>Develop a dedicated page for the RIPERN role.</p> <p>Include links to DH Policy Framework, Tool Kit, Poster, FAQs and Fact sheets</p>	All	1 month before start up	Patient Liaison Coordinator RIPERN

<p>Media kit</p>	<p>Communities in rural areas will now have even better access to care at their local hospitals with the new RIPERN role.</p> <p>The RIPERN is a new nursing role in Victoria that is supported by national and state legislation.</p> <p>Every patient that is supplied medicines by the RIPERN will receive current consumer information on that drug and may be followed-up by the nurse.</p> <p>If you need a doctor, the RIPERN will arrange this.</p>		<p>Distribute 1 month prior to start up then 6 months post</p>	<p>Director of Nursing Patient Liaison Coordinator RIPERN</p>
<p>Forums</p>	<p>The RIPERN is a new nursing role in Victoria that is supported by national and state legislation.</p> <p>The model has run in successfully in Queensland for many years.</p> <p>The RIPERN has had training and is authorised by law to practice in rural hospitals</p> <p>The RIPERN works best in a collaborative practice model involving the other key players on the health care teams, including doctors, pharmacists, nurse practitioners and paramedics.</p> <p>RIPERNS will help reduce the call on doctors for non-urgent, low risk patient presentations.</p>	<p>Key stakeholders Local MPs GPs Community pharmacists Paramedics</p>	<p>Planning phase prior to start up</p>	<p>Board CEO Director of Nursing Services Director of Medical Services</p>
<p>FAQ's and Poster</p>	<p>If you need a doctor the RIPERN will arrange this.</p> <p>You are advised to make a follow-up appointment with your GP after seeing the RIPERN, who will also advise your GP of your presentation with your permission.</p> <p>The nurse on duty will assess your clinical needs and arrange for you to see the most appropriate health professional.</p>	<p>Consumers</p>	<p>Poster displayed from start up</p> <p>Communication tools on display in urgent care area from start up</p>	<p>Nursing staff RIPERN Patient Liaison Coordinator</p>