

# Media Release

Friday 28 June 2013

## IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH INCREASING ACCESS TO HIV MEDICATIONS

This month marks 18 months since The Albion Centre launched the Enhanced Medication Access (EMA) Scheme; an innovative program that makes it easier for people living with HIV in New South Wales to access antiretroviral medications.

The scheme enables eligible HIV positive people to have their medications mailed to their home or a nominated community pharmacy.

The Albion Centre is the only centre in the state providing this service. Previously clients had to present to a hospital pharmacy.

Professor Don Smith, Head of Clinical Services at The Albion Centre, was integral in developing the scheme.

“Restricted access to medications is a well-known barrier to commencing and remaining on antiretroviral treatment,” he said.

“The EMA is a central way of supporting our HIV positive clients.”

Professor Julian Gold, Director of The Albion Centre said encouraging clients to remain on treatment is important not only for their own health, but in reducing the risk of transmission to others.

“Perhaps most importantly, this service is something our clients had been asking for. It had been a long time coming,” he said.

Service users say the scheme has made an enormous difference to their lives. They no longer need to take time off work to head to, and wait at, a hospital pharmacy.

The scheme has been especially well received by clients in regional New South Wales, and patients with mobility issues.

Facilitating easy access to medications for these groups is growing in importance as the average age of people living with HIV increases, and more approach retirement.

The scheme continues to grow, now servicing 235 patients, with almost three-quarters of users living in metropolitan Sydney. 57 community pharmacies from across the state have so far signed up to the service.

The EMA scheme was developed through collaboration between clinicians from The Albion Centre, the NSW Ministry of Health, The HIV/AIDS & Related Projects Unit, and community groups including ACON, Positive Life NSW, and the Australasian Society for HIV Medicine.

The Albion Centre is Australia’s only major multidisciplinary centre with a primary focus on HIV management, and is a division of the Prince of Wales Hospital. The Centre was established in 1985 to provide services to people living with, and affected by, HIV in response to the emerging epidemic. It employs over 50 professional staff and has more than 130 volunteers.

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