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"Bridging Theory and Practice: VEMS as a Tool for Vascular Access Education"

Johanna Brown (Haines)
Clinical Nurse/Clinical Facilitator – Metro North Kidney Health Service

Background...

Metro North Kidney Health Service (KHS) supports over 400 patients with chronic and end-stage kidney disease across 10 facilities within a 400 km^2 area in South-East Queensland. By the end of the 2024/2025 financial year, 390 patients were receiving Renal Replacement Therapy (RRT). A chart audit revealed that 291 of these patients had atypical vascular access, which we defined as one or more complications/abnormalities noted on their most recent duplex ultrasound.

Johanna Brown (Haines) - Clinical Nurse/Clinical Facilitator – Metro North Kidney Health Service

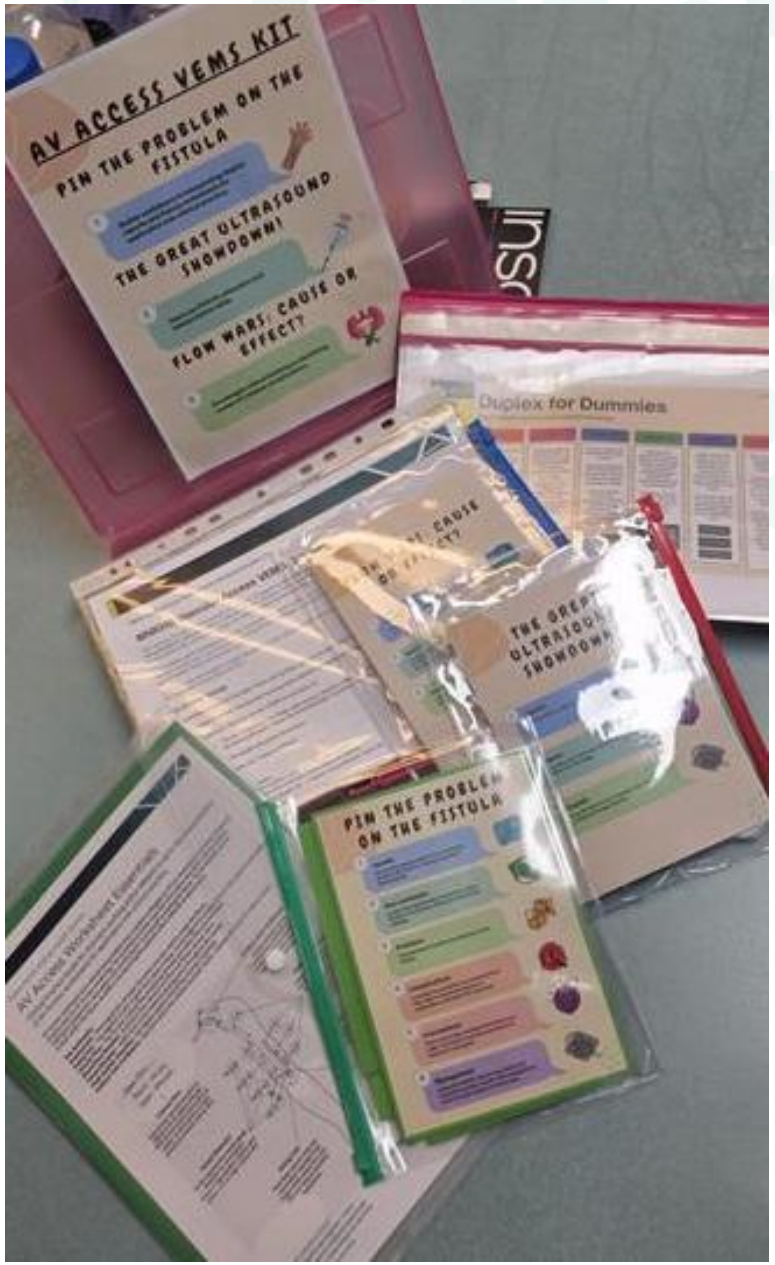
Aim...

To address the high prevalence of vascular access issues, we started a quality improvement project aimed at improving access longevity by enhancing staff capability in managing complications and abnormalities.

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Methods...

We developed educational resources and introduced Visually Enhanced Mental Simulation (VEMS) in-services across KHS. These interactive sessions promote decision-making and advanced understanding of vascular access.

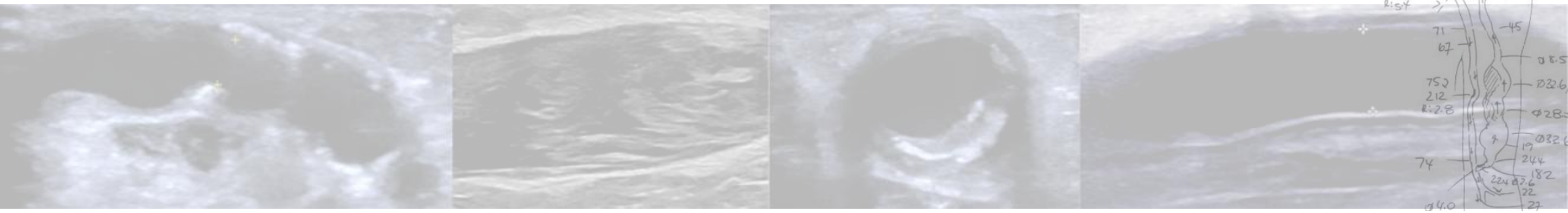


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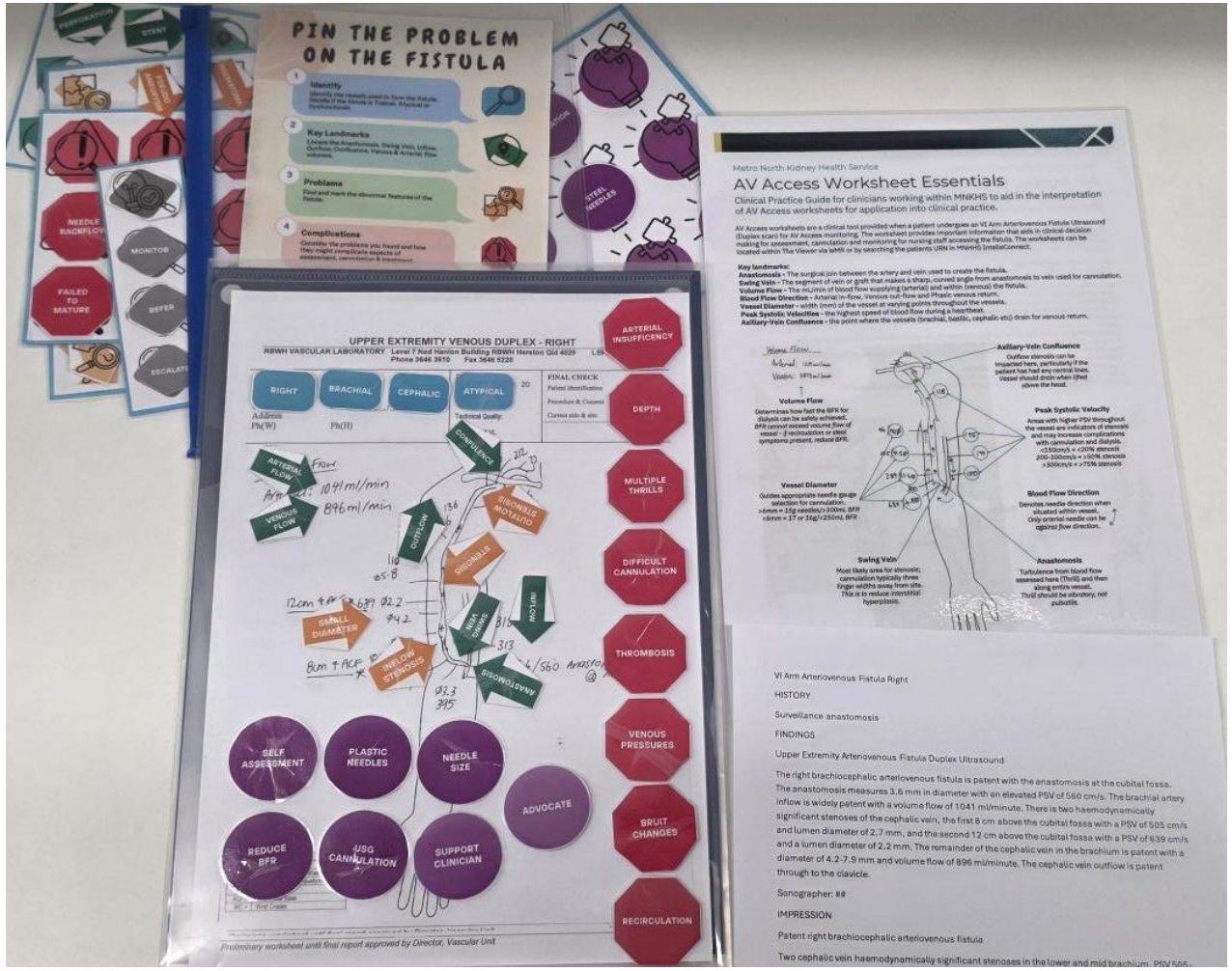
Results…

Three VEMS activities were integrated into routine education delivered by clinical facilitators.

- Pin the Problem on the Fistula: Builds confidence in interpreting duplex reports and fistula worksheets.
- The Great Ultrasound Showdown: Improves bedside ultrasound interpretation skills.
- Flow Wars: Cause or Effect?: Encourages critical thinking when identifying causes of common complications.



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Pin the Problem on the Fistula…

This activity builds confidence by guiding nurses through a structured, hands-on process of interpreting duplex reports and fistula worksheets, strengthening their ability to recognise patterns, identify abnormalities, and translate findings into safe, informed clinical decisions.

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The Great Ultrasound Showdown...

This activity builds confidence in interpreting and using POCUS by guiding participants to accurately match technical terms with their definitions, analyse and classify ultrasound images, discuss their reasoning, and explore how similar-appearing abnormalities can present differently—strengthening clinical judgement, pattern recognition, and diagnostic clarity.



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Flow Wars: Cause or Effect?...

This activity encourages critical thinking by prompting participants to analyse common vascular access flow problems, differentiate whether they represent causes or clinical manifestations of dysfunction, explore scenarios where issues may indicate both inflow and outflow compromise, and justify their reasoning—strengthening their ability to assess complex situations, ask “why,” and make informed clinical decisions.

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What now?

These VEMS activities have been embedded into locally delivered, full-day Vascular Access Workshops, giving protected time for nursing staff across the service to build confidence and capability in vascular access care.



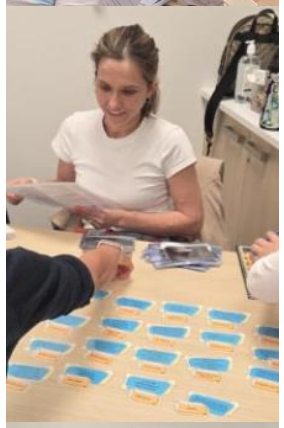


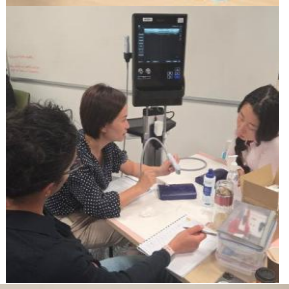
Metro North Kidney Health Service Nursing Education Team

Vascular Access Workshop - Foundations

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Conclusion...

"I liked that it didn't feel like a lecture, but we still learnt a lot."

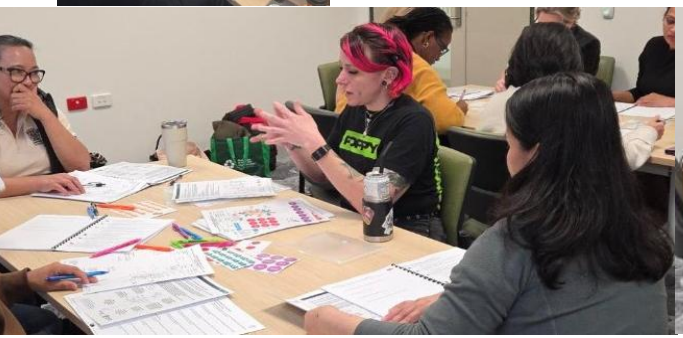
"This is the first time duplex and fistula worksheets have actually made sense."

"I didn't realise how much information I was missing until we broke it down like this."

"This actually relates to what we see on the floor every day."

"It helped me understand why things are happening, not just what to do."

"The group discussion made me realise others had the same questions I did."











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