

# Online Chronic Disease Self Management Program

## Research study

SA Health is trialling an innovative Stanford University chronic disease education program to determine its effectiveness in Australia. This supportive and proven online program assists people with a chronic disease to better manage their disease, take control of their health and help other South Australians in the process.

The program is especially suited to people who find it difficult to access health care services, such as people living in country areas or people who are house bound, working shifts or simply prefer not to participate in face-to-face self management education.

The study is an Internet based version of the community based Chronic Disease Self-Management Program workshop and is called '*Healthier Living with Ongoing Health Problems*'. The Program provides a 6-week course for people with long-term health conditions such as heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, multiple sclerosis etc. This is a 'pilot' project conducted as a research study, which means that it is being run for a limited time to test its format and usefulness for participants.

The course will be provided through a partnership between the Government of South Australia, Country Health and Stanford University. It will be available to 300 participants who must be resident of South Australia. It is accessible via the Internet and supported by trained staff and volunteers in South Australia.

### The Program evidence

As an Australian first, this is an opportunity for South Australia to trail the program which has proven successful in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. For Stanford University it is a research project that will give them further evidence about the suitability of the program in helping people self manage their chronic conditions.

If the program is rolled out across the state it should increase patient participation and self-management, particularly through improved partnerships between consumers and medical staff. It acts as a vital communication and educational tool, providing participants with access to a variety of resources and information relating to self-management of chronic disease. For Health professionals it will provide another tool for chronic disease management and may be incorporated into care planning.

Stanford evaluated the program in 2002-2003 with 958 adult study participants who had a diagnosis of heart disease (excluding uncomplicated hypertension), lung disease, or type 2 diabetes. Participants were randomly assigned to participate in the Program or to a control group. Both groups completed 3 online questionnaires about their health status, health care utilisation, self-efficacy and self-management behaviours over a 12-month period. The control group did not receive the Program, but received a gift certificate after completing each questionnaire and the book used in the Program at the end of the 12-month period.

At 1 year, the intervention group had significant improvements in health statuses compared with usual care control patients. The intervention group had similar results to the small-group chronic disease self management participants.



It was concluded that the program proved effective in improving health statutes by 1 year and is a viable alternative to the small-group Chronic Disease Self Management Program (Lorig KR, Ritter PL, Laurent DD, Plant K. Internet-Based Chronic Disease Self-Management: A Randomized Trial. Medical Care, 44(11), 964-71, 2006).

### How the study works

The Program is free except for telephone costs and any charges from the participants Internet service provider used to access the Internet. It is a 6-week online course that provides opportunities to people who live with long-term health conditions to develop new skills to manage their condition better on a day-to-day basis.

Topics covered include:

- 1) Managing tiredness,
- 2) Starting and maintaining an appropriate exercise or physical activity programme
- 3) Dealing with difficult emotions
- 4) Helping solve problems caused by your condition
- 5) Managing medicines
- 6) Improving communications with care professionals
- 7) Pain management
- 8) Communicating better with friends, family and colleagues.

Everyone who takes part will receive for a free copy of the handbook, [Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions](#)

### Eligibility

For the purpose of this course and research study participants must:

- > live in South Australia
- > have at least one long-term health condition
- > not have been in active treatment for cancer in the past year
- > not be pregnant
- > be at least 18 years old
- > not have taken part in a CDSMP's local courses in the community, or equivalent self-management courses such as Challenging Arthritis – the arthritis-specific self management course, or the Positive Self-management Course for people with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

To find out more about the Program, or to enrol in the Program, visit the web site: <https://sahealth.stanford.edu>. If you have any questions about the trial you can contact the Stanford Online Team by emailing them at [sahealth@med.stanford.edu](mailto:sahealth@med.stanford.edu)

### How the research works

Participants will be asked to complete 3 questionnaires about their long-term health condition, health care, activities and mood – one questionnaire at the time of enrolment, one at six months and one at twelve months after completion. Each questionnaire takes 20 to 30 minutes to complete and must be completed online.

The research study will be used to contribute to Stanford University's evidence about the effectiveness of web based programs for the improvement in self management techniques.



If you have any questions relating to research, you can contact the Stanford Research team of Katy Plant or Diana Laurent by email at [sahealth@med.stanford.edu](mailto:sahealth@med.stanford.edu).

### Benefits of participation

The main benefit to participants in taking part is to take control of their health and health care in a convenient and non face-to-face setting. Some of the other benefits to participants include:

- undertaking an innovative, interactive program in participants own time, at home or at work, when it is convenient
- the program has been evaluated as a success in the United States of America in improving self-efficacy (that is the belief in your own ability to succeed in specific situations) and health status of participants a year after completing the program
- facilitators and fellow participants will encourage participation and completion of the program
- participants are taking part in an innovative research trial that, if successful and rolled out across the state, could positively influence other people with chronic conditions

### For more information

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For more information about SA Health's involvement in the trial please contact the Program Project Officer on 8724 5222 or at [david.kelly@health.sa.gov.au](mailto:david.kelly@health.sa.gov.au).



**Government  
of South Australia**

SA Health