

'Communication – a basic human right'

Have you noticed over the course of this year that a new symbol was on the front window at n8 Health? Or noticed our certificate on the notice board?

Last year our n8 Health Speech Pathologist, Ruth Glanville, was involved in the International Communication Project 2014 (ICP 2014). The aim was for speech pathology organisations around the world to join together and highlight the importance of human communication – and how communication disabilities severely impact every aspect of life.

Ruth worked to increase people's awareness that Communication disorders limit a person's ability to participate fully in family life, their community, education and work. Without access to key services, people with communication disorders are at a lifelong disadvantage and that Speech Pathologists play a critical role.

One of her projects completed throughout the year was providing training and support within n8 Health to assist staff in having resources and knowing the skills to communicate effectively with people who have a communication disability. We then underwent an assessment by the Communication Resource Centre in Bendigo and Melbourne and n8 Health Echuca was *awarded the Communication Access Symbol in November* last year. *We achieved the standards for communication access* and are formally recognized as Communication Accessible. This means that the team at n8 Health Echuca and facility support and are responsive to people with communication needs to get their message across. This includes treating the person with dignity and respect, talking directly to them, giving time to get their message across; actively listening to the message and being willing to use other methods of communicating. Just recently a review was completed and n8 Health was again successful in maintaining this accreditation!

An example of these skills in use are with a regular visitor to the center- Ian. Over the past two years, Ian has been assisted with his communication following a stroke by a Speech Pathology colleague at Echuca Regional Health- Bryony. While Ian's understanding of spoken language is good, he has difficulty expressing himself clearly and needs time to process what he wants to say. He has started using a program on his iPad that he can use if he is stuck saying a particular word.

Ian mentioned that it is "frustrating" having a communication difficulty as "the memory bank is alright but hard to get words out". It can also be challenging out in the community as people don't wait for you to try and get your words together. However, he finds n8 Health "very supportive". Ian commented that it's "good at n8. They give me enough time to communicate".

It is hoped that the communication access symbol will become just as recognised as the wheelchair accessible symbol- which the whole community identifies.

For more information on communication access-
<http://www.scopevic.org.au/index.php/site/whatweoffer/communicationresourcecentre/communicationaccess>

