

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bug Breakfast is a series of hour-long breakfast seminars on communicable diseases that has been delivered by the NSW Department of Health since 1990. Bug Breakfast was first broadcast by videoconference in 1999. Since then, the number of remote sites that regularly seek to be connected by videoconference has continued to increase and currently up to 10 remote sites are linked to each session. The size of the live site audience at North Sydney has also increased to 40–50 participants.

An evaluation was undertaken to assess:

- the impact of videoconferencing on the learning environments at both North Sydney and at the remote sites;
- the perceived value of Bug Breakfast to the professional development of all participants.

A four-part evaluation was undertaken of the July 2002 session:

1. participants were surveyed using a self-administered questionnaire;
2. facilitators at each remote site participated in a semi-structured interview;
3. presenters were interviewed;
4. organisers completed a self-administered questionnaire.

Ten remote sites requested a connection to the session and eight were successfully connected. The audience comprised: 50 people at the live site and another 47 between the remote sites. The response rate was 93 per cent.

The audience at the live site differed to that at the remote sites. While both groups were multidisciplinary, the North Sydney audience were mainly public health professionals and included a large number of trainees from various public health training programs. The remote audience included a large number of clinical professionals. The audience was united by a common interest in communicable diseases, immunisation, and also the provision of training–continuing education.

Participants and facilitators clearly articulated recurrent problems with the learning environments. The major concerns were: the size of the room at the live site and, for the remote sites, the quality of the sound.

Strong support was expressed by participants and facilitators for Bug Breakfast's role in professional development. Participants cited the quality of the organisation, the expert speakers, and the opportunity to access these speakers through the question time, as features that they valued.

A series of recommendations were developed to improve the delivery of Bug Breakfast, some of which have already been actioned. For example:

- the NSW Telehealth Initiative, who coordinate the videoconferencing facilities at North Sydney, has hastened the installation of facilities in a larger suite of rooms. The new venue can accommodate up to 80 people. A new microphone system has also been installed, which will improve the quality of the sound for the remote audience;
- dates for Bug Breakfast have been scheduled for 2003 to allow remote facilitators to book their facilities in advance.

The current method of connecting sites will be reviewed to determine whether the demand from new sites to be linked can be accommodated.