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A new way home

Patients at the melanoma clinic at RPA Hospital now have the option to go home from hospital just days following surgery under a new care model with Sydney District Nursing.

The new model is a research collaboration between the melanoma service and Sydney District Nursing, said Associate Professor Robyn Saw, RPA's melanoma and surgical oncology department head.



“Patients who would normally spend a week in hospital after a lymph node dissection can now return home two days after surgery, with daily home visits by community nurses for up to six weeks,” said Associate Professor Saw.

“The model mobilises patients earlier, aiding their recovery, and is common practice in the USA. But this is the first model of its kind in Sydney.”

44 year-old Darragh McMahon, pictured, came to Australia 22 years ago from Ireland.

Many of his twenty years as an excavator driver were spent wearing shorts, and his discovery of a melanoma on his right calf was a big shock.

The melanoma was removed, but further testing meant Darragh needed surgery to remove lymph nodes in his groin.

The father of four was an ideal candidate for the new model, and became the first person to go home from hospital just two days after dissection surgery, with daily care from the Sydney District Nursing team.

“I was a bit worried at first, but once I got used to the idea, it was great to be home. The community nurses were very good and gave me great reassurance,” said Darragh.

“It was far easier to be at home than having the kids come to hospital to visit.”

The melanoma service at RPA performs about 60 dissections each year, and it is hoped many will benefit from the new model, said melanoma clinical nurse consultant Natalie Forster, who developed the model with Sydney District Nursing.

“Patients are carefully selected to ensure they have the support at home and the ability to self-manage.”