

Media Release

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Technology ensures clients safety at home

One of the impacts of the current COVID-19 pandemic is the increase in social isolation, especially for those who are older, live alone, or are vulnerable.

We are taking extra steps to support our clients who have reduced their face-to-face contact with family or care workers, by offering technology which allows them to stay safe and connected during periods of isolation.

This technology is called “Umps”, which is named after the grandfather of the inventor.

Umps is led by CEO Adam Jahnke who developed the system for his grandfather, whose health was declining. The idea came when Adam noticed how frequently his grandfather used his kettle to make coffee. He then decided to design a smart plug system for the main appliances in the home to monitor regular routines. These power plugs learn your usual routine, and if a change in activity indicates that you might need help, they can alert family or friends. VMCH connected with Umps in 2019 and ran a successful trial with Home Care clients in Gippsland.

Valerie, one of our Home Care Packages clients, lives alone in Fitzroy, and has periods of confusion. Her Case Manager, Samuel suggested that she would get value out of using the Umps technology.

“She was a bit perplexed about it at first,” said Samuel. “But once I went out to visit her and a chat about it, she agreed that it would be good to have. Her confusion has been getting worse and she doesn’t have any family close by. She used to live with her husband, but he passed away, so she is definitely more isolated now.”

When the system arrived, Samuel installed the plugs onto the items she uses every day. The process was simple, attaching the plugs onto her radio, kettle, TV, her fridge, and then her bedroom lamp.

“I am glad she has the system set up now. It’s a failsafe, if anything happens to her, we will know and can send help. It’s a bit hard sometimes, when our clients live alone. It’s always a worry when we call and there is no answer, so this is a backup, and we are able to make sure she is ok.”

Chris Coughlan, VMCH Strategy and Innovation Advisor says the availability of this technology has been much-needed in response to the vulnerability of our clients to COVID-19.

“Time has been a key consideration in VMCH’s response to COVID-19. To accelerate the deployment of the Umps Smart Home, we leveraged extra capacity in our Customer Service Centre team to call more than 100 clients in just two days.

“The reception was overwhelmingly positive, with more than a third of clients opting to fund Umps through their home care package immediately, and most of the remaining clients requesting further information.

“We have been working closely with Umps to make this technology available to clients as quickly as possible. It will support our clients to remain safe, particularly at this time when social visits are likely to be reduced.

“After receiving training on the Umps Smart Home by video, our Customer Service Centre team contacted 113 of our most vulnerable clients on Home Care Packages. 40 clients chose to take up the Umps Smart Home by funding it through their package. We’ve since reached out to our remaining clients and are now crafting a suite of technology solutions to help provide more proactive care to our clients in the future.”

If you, or a family member is a VMCH client, call our Customer Service Centre on 1300 698 624 or visit <https://vmch.com.au/services/at-home-aged-care/umps/> for more information.

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About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic not for profit organisation, compassion, respect and inclusion aren't just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we've been around for over a century, we're always moving forward. We stay true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives, providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey. We provide a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.



About Umps

Bettering the lives of older people and those who care for them is the reason we exist. We do this by enabling smarter kinds of care with the use of simple, intuitive technology that works in harmony with a person's way of life.

Our Smart Home generates insights about a person's health and wellbeing using smart plugs that fit on any appliance to detect when it's used, like when the kettle is boiled, the TV is turned on or a bedside lamp is switched off. If changes in activity indicate a decline in your wellbeing, Umps will contact the user or their nominated contacts to make sure they are OK.

Originally built to support our own family, Umps is now used by individuals, aged care providers and governments across the country to provide smarter care for a better way of living.