

Southern Inland Health Initiative

ETS used to diagnose tonsil abscess

A run-of-the-mill sore throat nearly became a medical emergency for 42-year old Scott Morton of Jurien Bay.

“I had a really sore throat, which the GP diagnosed as tonsillitis and prescribed some antibiotics. He said I should start feeling better within a few days, but by the weekend I was feeling a lot worse and my wife pestered me into getting it checked out again.”

The Jurien Bay Medical Centre has a GP available during the week, but is staffed by experienced nurses over the weekend.

Since December 2012, the nurses have been able to use the Emergency Telehealth Service to access specialist emergency physicians for advice for ill and injured patients.

“When I got to the Emergency Department, the nurse took one look down my throat and said ‘Dear me’ and straight away contacted the doctor using the Emergency Telehealth Service.

“He asked me to open my mouth and stick out my tongue. To be honest, I didn’t expect much sitting there on the edge of the bed speaking to a doctor on a screen, but he used the controls at his end to zoom in and pretty quickly diagnosed an abscess on my tonsil.

“He said I would need to head down to Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital in Perth and that he would make contact with the hospital and the surgeons to let them know I was on my way. My wife drove me to Perth and we met with a nurse in the emergency department, who had all my paperwork already from the ETS.

“The doctor who examined me agreed with the diagnosis of the ETS doctor. He said the abscess was so large it was blocking 90% of my airway. They lanced the abscess – it’s not a good experience – and I stayed overnight, but was discharged the next morning.

“I was back in Jurien Bay within 48 hours of my original visit to the medical centre. If I had waited until the Monday to see my GP, I would have been in very bad shape!

“I later heard that the nurse who first examined me in Jurien Bay thought it was a massive growth in my throat, which is why she was so concerned. So I’m really amazed that a doctor could use video-conferencing to diagnose the abscess, and that it matched 100% with the diagnosis of the doctor I saw at Sir Charles Gardiner when he saw me in the flesh.

“The technology is quite incredible.”