



New e-health broadband technology keeps seniors smiling

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Regular access to dental services is an important element in maintaining a healthy smile. Older people living in aged care facilities are at significant risk for dental diseases as they face significant barriers accessing dental services. Many residents have poor oral health and are often dependent on others to maintain their oral hygiene.

New e-health broadband technology is delivering access to dental services to those that are most in need. The Institute for a Broadband-Enabled Society (IBES) is exploring the use of tele-dentistry to provide dental services remotely. The study involves the use of trained tele-dentistry assistants using an intraoral camera and video conferencing to perform an examination screening for oral health diseases and developing treatment plans in real-time.

In the study, over half of the aged care residents have high dental treatment needs, with only a few dentists to provide care, and only 11 per cent of residents have seen a dentist in the past year. Tele-dentistry will provide greater access to dental services to those in residential aged care facilities, with further trials to occur taking advantage of high speed broadband.

IBES researcher, Associate Professor Rodrigo Mariño from the Oral Health CRC said "The technology provides an important step in closing the gaps in providing oral health care services to underserved populations. For example, a remote dental check-up would alleviate the need to travel for both the dentist and the patient. Tele-dentistry will also be beneficial to those with limited mobility, such as the elderly, and those living in rural and remote locations."

Established in 2009, IBES is an exciting multidisciplinary research venture focusing on applications of next-generation broadband and the benefits of these applications to society.

IBES is jointly funded by the University of Melbourne and the Victorian Government which recently committed \$5 million to IBES and its research projects over three years.