Engaging and supporting general practice in refugee health:

Background

People from refugee backgrounds, including those seeking asylum, have specific and often complex health, welfare and language service needs. General practice is crucial to the provision of on arrival health assessment and ongoing care and there are many practices in Victoria that have developed significant expertise in refugee health care, including clinical skills and organisational capacity. General practices are part of a broader network of services including refugee health nurses and other practitioners in community health, specialist refugee health services, torture and trauma counselling services, refugee health fellows and Primary Health Networks.

The Victorian Refugee Health Network (the Network) have a history of significant work in supporting general practice to respond to the health needs of people from refugee backgrounds. This work includes the development of a number of guides for general practice, several projects and annual learning forums, including RACGP accredited modules for GPs and practice nurses. The Network have worked in partnerships with the Divisions of General Practice, Medicare Locals and other peak bodies such as Networking Health Victoria (formerly General Practice Victoria) and are currently engaging with Primary Health Networks as they scope and develop local priorities.

Purpose of survey

The Network Primary Care Project aims to increase the number of general practices who are able, willing and confident to work with people from refugee backgrounds, including asylum seekers. Further information about this project can be found at http://refugeehealthnetwork.org.au/engage/primary-health-care/

This survey aims to understand the knowledge, skills, attitudes and systems required in general practice for the delivery of accessible and appropriate health care to people from refugee backgrounds. The survey also seeks to understand the supports required by general practice for effective quality improvement activities and will inform the development and implementation of the Refugee Health General Practice Engagement Tool.

The survey has been developed with reference to a number of sources, including the Refugee Health Assessment Template, Promoting Refugee Health and accompanying desktop guide, a literature review and in consultation with the expert Project Advisory Group and bicultural workers who support people from refugee backgrounds.

Who will be surveyed?

Staff from general practices who have implemented practice change or quality improvement activities to better respond to the needs of a particular group of people (i.e. people with mental ill health, people with diabetes, people who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people from refugee backgrounds) are encouraged to complete the survey. General practice staff invited to complete the survey include general practitioners, practice nurses, practice managers, receptionists and allied health.

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes. If you would prefer to participate in an interview to participate in this project, then please contact Samantha Furneaux at furneauxs@foundationhouse.org.au or 03 9389 8915.

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1 Victorian Auditor-General’s Report, 2014, Access to services for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers
2 Department of Health (DoH), 2014, The Victorian refugee and asylum seeker health action plan 2014 – 2018, State of Victoria, Department of Health
Refugee Health General Practice Engagement Tool

Preliminary stakeholder consultation and a literature review has been undertaken in order to better understand strategies that work in engaging and supporting general practice in practice based change, to improve healthcare for people from refugee backgrounds.

The Network Primary Care Project team have begun to conceptualise and develop a Refugee Health General Practice Engagement Tool (working title). The tool will provide guidance for a structured interview between practices and ‘general practice facilitators’ to determine the needs, resources and priorities of the practice in order to deliver accessible and appropriate health care to people from refugee backgrounds. General practice facilitators may include Refugee Health Nurses, Refugee Health Fellows, GP liaison workers or allied health.

In order to ensure that evidence based approaches are used, and to provide guidance for practices and practice facilitators, the tool will outline a framework for improvement, including core/baseline measures and measures for continuing development. The tool will inform the development, implementation and evaluation of an action plan for practice based changes to improve health care for people from refugee backgrounds.

The tool will utilise a whole of practice approach and will therefore identify both clinical and non-clinical aspects of general practice service delivery that impact on the accessibility and appropriateness for people from refugee backgrounds. Broader organisational systems and processes will be considered in the tool in order to embed sustainable practice changes that support better health care for people from refugee backgrounds.