



victorian refugee
health network

Activity summary 2015-16

The Victorian Refugee Health Network ('the Network') is auspiced by the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc (Foundation House). The Network aims to facilitate greater coordination and collaboration amongst health and community services to provide more accessible and appropriate health services for people of refugee backgrounds in Victoria.

This is a brief summary of the Network 2014-15 Activity Report. More details on all Network activities can be found at the Network website: www.refugeehealthnetwork.org.au

Major projects and key activities

Community Consultation: Talking about health and experiences of using health services with people from refugee backgrounds

In 2015-6 the Network conducted a major project to consult with people from refugee backgrounds, including people seeking asylum, about their experiences of using health services in Victoria.

The project drew on the expertise of bicultural workers employed in Victorian health, community, and settlement agencies, and resourced these workers to conduct consultations with the refugee background communities in which they work. 115 consultations were conducted with individuals and groups from refugee backgrounds across Victoria. The project collated themes identified in the responses and, under eight key themes areas, collated the perspectives of community members, findings that were particularly strong for specific sub-populations of the consultation respondents, perspectives of advisory group members, case studies of good practice approaches to supporting people's wellbeing, and recommendations for a range of stakeholders.

The report is available on the Network website here: <http://refugeehealthnetwork.org.au/talking-about-health-and-experiences-of-using-health-services-with-people-from-refugee-backgrounds/>

Primary Care Project

The Network built on the work commenced in 2014 on the Primary Care project, which aimed to increase the number of general practices who are able, willing and confident to work with people from refugee backgrounds. 2015-16 Project activities included the development of a series of tools and resources, including a Framework for Continuing Improvement, outlining systems and skills required to deliver healthcare to people from refugee backgrounds in the areas of communication, coordination and management, and clinical care. These project tools and resources are available online: <http://refugeehealthnetwork.org.au/resources-for-engaging-and-supporting-general-practice/>

A detailed project report about the project may be accessed here:

<http://refugeehealthnetwork.org.au/engaging-and-supporting-general-practice-in-refugee-health/>

Primary Health Care Forum – August 2015

The Primary Care Forum on 27 August 2015 brought together 60 primary health care practitioners with an interest in the delivery of responsive, accessible and appropriate primary health care to people from refugee backgrounds and asylum seekers. Participants included GPs and Refugee Health Nurses, specialist services, policy makers and researchers from both metropolitan and regional Victoria to discuss a range of topics on refugee related health care. Presentations included community perspectives, immunisation, optometry, the NDIS, health literacy, and the Victorian refugee and asylum seeker health action plan. Afternoon workshops included mental health, chronic health, and barriers and enablers in the provision of primary care. Presentations may be found here: <http://refugeehealthnetwork.org.au/primary-health-care-forum-2014-report-and-powerpoints/>

Immunisation

The Immunisation Working Group brought together key stakeholders to improve access to catch-up immunisations for people from refugee backgrounds including people seeking asylum in Victoria. In 2016, the working group prepared briefing papers on: No Jab, No Pay – implications for service providers and refugee background communities; and ACIR – Issues Arising and presented them to relevant government bodies. The group developed resources including an information sheet for GPs and other immunisation providers; and an information sheet for caseworkers and other health service staff. A catch-up immunisation workshop for refugee health nurses was organised and delivered at the Refugee Health Program Networking Day at Foundation House in May 2016. The Working Group contributed to the development of a multilingual brochure on catch-up vaccination for clients produced by the Centre for Culture Ethnicity and Health.

Stakeholder engagement, communication and dissemination

Website www.refugeehealthnetwork.org.au

This past financial year the website has been used as a tool to collaborate with partners on large projects and disseminate project resources and information rapidly, for instance in the Primary Care. 74 new pages and posts were created in 2015-16, primarily in our library to showcase reports and resources related to refugee health, but also including the development of content related pages

e-Bulletin

Subscription to the e-Bulletin continues to increase, with subscription base 1470 people at the end of June 2015, covering a broad range of subscribers from organisations including primary and secondary health, government, community services, education and settlement services.

Policy and Practice Update

Network Policy and Practice Updates are a quarterly, state-wide, invite-only web-conference. The updates are designed to facilitate rapid, two-way information sharing, where participants can receive policy and program updates, hear short presentations from others working in refugee health, and have opportunities to make contributions. Invited participants include representatives from the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS), Primary Health Networks, specialist refugee health services, community health, GPs, refugee health nurses and allied health workers employed by the Refugee Health Program, and asylum seeker and settlement support services. The Network hosted four online policy and practice updates, with participation from across the state.

Presentations

- Poster presentations at Primary Health Care Research & Information Service Primary Care Conference July 2015 and June 2016
- Refugee Health Program training days
- Communities Council of Ethnic Issues (Eastern Region) Refugee Health Forum, April 2016
- Presentation to Yarra Settlement Forum in April 2016 about Foundation House report *Promoting the engagement of interpreters in Victorian health services*
- Presentation to the Refugee Health Primary Health Networks forum (Canberra), June 2016

Display tables at conferences and other events

- Royal Melbourne Hospital Community Agencies Expo
- Immunisation Nurses Special Interest Group, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation
- Refugee Health Training for General Practices in the North, partnership with North West Melbourne Primary Health Network and AMES
- Communities Council of Ethnic Issues (Eastern Region) Refugee Health Forum, April 2016

Journal Publications

- Elisha Riggs, Jane Yelland, Philippa Duell-Piening and Stephanie Brown. 'Improving health literacy in refugee populations', *Medical Journal of Australia*, Vol 204:1, pp 9-10 (January, 2016)
- Elisha Riggs, Jane Yelland, Josef Szwarc, Sayed Wahidid, Sue Casey, Donna Chesters, Fatema Fouladi, Philippa Duell-Piening, Rebecca Giallo and Stephanie Brown, 'Fatherhood in a New Country: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Experiences of Afghan Men and Implications for Health Services', *Birth: Issues in Perinatal Care* (online 2015)
- E Riggs, S Rajan, S Casey, N Kilpatrick 'Refugee child oral health', *Oral Diseases*, doi:10.1111/odi.12530

Partnerships, advisory groups and submissions

Partnerships

- Health Issues Centre – Health Information for Refugee Women Project
- Murdoch Children's Research Institute and 8 other health providers Bridging the Gap
- The OPTIMISE project - regional research groups, executive and national advisory group
- Refugee Health Network of Australia (RHeNA) (including small amount of secretariat support)
- The Water Well Project (www.thewaterwellproject.org) – health promotion
- Murdoch Children's Research Institute – academic partnership including Health Literacy, Childhood Resilience study, Refugee Fathers study
- Online learning module for case workers developed by VUT, now hosted on the Network website
- General Practice Training, partnership with Primary Health Networks to deliver a targeted skill development for General Practice
- Network of Asylum Seeker Agencies Victoria – NASA Vic
- EACH Social and Community Health and ISIS Primary Care – Primary Care Project partnership

Membership of advisory/working groups

- North West Metro Department Health & Human Service project developed from the Northern working group for Health - *Humanitarian Arrivals and Health Services*
- Dandenong Refugee Health Research Consortium
- South Eastern Melbourne Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health Coordination Group
- Geelong Refugee Health Sub Committee Meeting
- Outer Northern Refugee Health Network
- Eastern Region Refugee Health Network
- Western Melbourne Refugee & Asylum Seeker Health Partnership
- Bendigo Refugee Health & Wellbeing Working Group
- Travencore CAHMS CALD Reference Group
- Ethnic Communities Council Victoria – Policy Advisory Committee on Health and Wellbeing
- Meeting to support the development of the Cabrini Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health Hub
- Plenty Valley Community Health Services proposal for Refugee Care Coordination Project
- Victorian Settlement Planning Outcomes Committee Data working group
- AMES Australian Action Group for newly arrived refugees with disabilities
- Expert advice to Monash Health Dental in the development of their Psychosocial Risk Assessment Tool to assist with screening of people from refugee backgrounds
- Communities Council of Ethnic Issues (Eastern Region) Refugee Health Forum Advisory Group
- Advice to the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health about the development of new multilingual resource on catch-up immunisation for the Health Translations Directory
- Royal Women's Hospital, Primary Care and Population Health Advisory Committee (Sue Casey)

Network participation in consultations

- State Mental Health Plan
- Refugee Resettlement Advisory Committee – Health and Mental Health Working Group
- Health West Primary Care Partnership Consultation Access and Equity
- Dental Health Services Victoria Strategic Plan 2016-2021
- Ethnic Communities Council consultation about response to Royal Commission into Family Violence
- Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship Multicultural Policy consultation – health issues
- National Targeted Consultation on the National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions
- Department of Health and Human Services Review of General Practice Engagement Guide – submission of a case study from the Primary Care Project

Submissions

- RACGP Standards for General Practice x 2
- MBS reform
- ASID/RHeNA recommendations
- NTAC to advocate for quant to be MBS listed