

Bridging the Gap
addressing refugee inequalities through primary health care service innovation

News
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*If we keep on doing what we have been doing
We are going to keep on getting what we have been getting*
(Wandersman et al Am J Comm Psych 2008)

We included this quote in the successful NHMRC partnership grant application last year. Over the past few months the MCRI team have been meeting with key people in the partner organisations. Many have articulated the need to 'do things differently'. This has underpinned enthusiastic conversations about the potential for Bridging the Gap innovations in trying out new ways of the 'doing' to improve health and health care for families of refugee background.

Introducing the program facilitator

Bridging the Gap is much more than a single project or a research endeavour, rather it is a program of work within and across health sectors, comprising a number of quality improvement projects and system reform. Wendy Dawson has recently been appointed as the Program Facilitator, and will play a key role in coordinating and facilitating Bridging the Gap.

Wendy is interested in communities being equipped to offer high quality, effective care at the beginning and the end of life, particularly for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. She has pursued this interest in a range of positions; most recently at the Inner South East Primary Care Partnership (collaboration and partnership working between local governments and primary health care, including the Medicare Local).

Wendy was Manager, Maternity Services in the Victorian Department of Health for a number of years. She undertook two external secondments to Southern Health and completed a Masters of Public Administration. Wendy was Manager Innovation and Reform in the Council of Australian Governments' National Health Workforce Taskforce (NHWT), during a period of tumultuous inter-governmental relations, where she initiated work on workforce configurations able to support evidence informed practice. Prior to working in Government she completed graduate studies in Health Economics whilst working at the Centre for Mothers' and Children's Health. She has worked in Local Government, as Co-ordinator of the Western Region Centre for Working Women's Centre, in community development in St Kilda and established the Northcote Tenants Union.

Wendy is based at MCRI, Parkville (but will be out in the south-east and west frequently!) and can be contacted on wendy.dawson@mcri.edu.au 9936 6051 or 0402 232 129.

Coming to see you ...fact finding and mapping

Wendy Dawson is approaching staff at the intervention sites (Monash Health, Sunshine Hospital, City of Greater Dandenong and City of Wyndham) to assist with the fact finding and mapping phase of *Bridging the Gap*.

The main objective of mapping is to identify and describe services accessed by women and families of refugee background for pregnancy, birthing, postnatal and early childhood health care sufficient to enable commencement of BTG quality improvement projects.

The topics to be discussed at these meetings will include:

- Access issues for women of refugee background
- Use and availability of interpreters, bicultural, multicultural staff
- Assessment of social circumstances and emotional health
- Referrals, transfers, integration/linkages
- Organisation or model(s) of care

- Cultural responsiveness
- Challenges, system issues
- Opportunities for 'Plan Do Study Act' quality improvement, innovation, redesign

We realise that this is a particularly busy and challenging time to be doing this and will of course be respectful by being as brief and to-the-point as we can.

Having a baby in a new country: the views and experiences of Afghan families and stakeholders



This project, undertaken by the Healthy Mothers Healthy Families research group at MCRI in partnership with Foundation House, aimed to explore Afghan women and men's experiences of care during and after pregnancy and in the first postpartum year; and the experiences of stakeholders in providing perinatal and postnatal care to refugee families. The project provides evidence of the challenges facing health services in responding to the needs of vulnerable families and a platform for the development of quality improvement initiatives.

The project report will be launched by Professor Euan Wallace on **Tuesday 10th December** commencing at 10am at Foundation House, Dandenong. We extend an invitation to the launch to all Bridging the Gap investigators and partners. Please contact Marion Tait (HMHF@mcri.edu.au or 99366674) if you haven't received your invitation. The project team would be delighted if you could join them.

Partnership forum in February 2014

A full-day partnership forum will take place on **Thursday 27th February 2014, 9am – 4.30pm** at Foundation House, Brunswick. All investigators and key stakeholders at the partnership organisations are encouraged to attend. Part of the day will be an opportunity to participate in Foundation House's successful 'The Refugee Experience' training session. This session is being modified specifically for Bridging the Gap and will be made available to the implementation sites as a strategy for supporting staff in working with families of refugee background.

The day will also be an opportunity to come together to discuss the first of the Plan Do Study Act quality improvement projects and the evaluation. A day not to be missed!

NHMRC success

Two NHMRC grants recently awarded to project investigators include a focus on families of refugee background:

Stephanie Brown, Elisha Riggs, Sue Casey, Jane Yelland and collaborators were awarded a project grant: *The Childhood Resilience Study: building evidence for reducing health inequalities across the lifecourse.*

Jane Yelland was awarded a Career Development Fellowship for a research program: *Healthy Futures for vulnerable families: addressing inequalities in maternal and child health care for refugee and Aboriginal families*

Contacts

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A Partnership Program: Murdoch Childrens Research Institute; Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House); Monash Health; Western Health (Sunshine Hospital); City of Wyndham; City of Greater Dandenong; Department of Health; Department of Education and Early Childhood Development; South East Melbourne and South West Melbourne Medicare Locals; Municipal Association of Victoria