

Refugee Health Flexible Fund

Online Forum #2

2 pm – 3.45 pm, Wednesday, 5 April 2023

Summary Report

Organisers

NSW Ministry of Health, Health and Social Policy Branch, Community Care and Priority Populations Unit: Nick Sandrejko (Senior Policy Officer) and Dr Ilse Blignault (Consultant).

Funding

NSW Government through the Refugee Health Flexible Fund 2021-22 to 2022-23 (RHFF).

Attendance

78 people joined the forum.

Forum Recording

A recording of the forum is available on the RHFF [webpage](#).

Overview

Fifteen projects have been funded across NSW to address the goals and priorities of the [NSW Refugee Health Plan 2022-2027](#). They share a common purpose, i.e., to ensure access to timely, culturally responsive and trauma-informed healthcare for people from refuge and asylum seeker backgrounds. The projects focus on a range of healthcare needs and priority groups, including people living in rural and regional areas.

As the second of three online forums designed to promote knowledge exchange and learning, this forum had the following objectives:

1. To strengthen connections and encourage networking across the project teams
2. To share process, outcomes and lessons to date from selected projects
3. To showcase the range of work being undertaken to interested stakeholders.

Forum Format

The forum began with an Acknowledgement of Country and opening remarks by Liz Junck (Director, Community Care and Priority Populations Unit, Health and Social Policy Branch). It featured extended presentations by five project teams. The presentations included initiatives to increase rates of cancer screening, enhance oral health care and regional refugee and multicultural health services, as well as a multicultural peer mentoring program. These were followed by a round robin for other project teams to share important news. In closing, Nick Sandrejko spoke about plans for the RHFF and thanked everyone for their participation.

Extended presentations

– Watch the [forum recording](#) for more information and see [here](#) for contact details

The complexities and challenges of working with refugees and asylum seekers and other culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, and within a large and complex health system, were common themes. Together with funding from the RHFF, partnership, collaboration and committed leadership were important enabling factors in all projects. With growing numbers of new arrivals, limited access to GPs and some medical specialities is a significant ongoing concern, especially in regional Local Health Districts (LHDs).

Cancer Institute NSW

– Nina Hartcher & Sheetal Challam
(At 7:50 mins to 20:40 mins of video)

The ‘Refugee Cancer Screening Partnership Project’ aims to increase awareness of and intention to participate in the three national cancer screening programs among refugee communities, specifically from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. Following capacity building workshops for 32 settlement and community workers at partner agencies, the team conducted 17 consultations involving 161 people in seven locations across NSW, finding important differences across language groups. GP recommendation was the biggest motivator for screening. A range of intervention activities are planned. Key learnings to date include the need to budget for interpreting, translations and transcribing and the work involved in gaining ethics approval to support research dissemination.

Centre for Oral Health Strategy

– Siobhan Kelton
(At 22:19 mins to 34:30 mins of video)

‘Enhancing Oral Health Care for Refugees in NSW’ has two objectives: to improve access to oral health care and preventive information for people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and provide trauma-informed care in-service training for oral health teams. This collaborative project involves several interventions along the care pathway to ensure that patients receive compassionate, flexible and trauma-informed care throughout. Indicators show improved access. Key learnings include the importance of local context (different processes in different LHDs) and communication (bi-monthly meetings to discuss any issues, barriers, successes and challenges).

Mid North Coast LHD

– Michele Greenwood
(At 35:10 mins to 49:30 mins of video)

The refugee health clinic in Coffs Harbour started in 2006 as a nurse-led clinic with GP support. Following the arrival of Iraqi and Syrian refugees in 2016, demand for services has more than trebled. Service enhancements funded through the RHFF include an extra nurse position, social work and physiotherapy. Availability of GPs and delays in staff recruitment have been ongoing problems.

Discussion centred on advocacy for primary care refugee health locally and at the national level.

Northern NSW LHD

– Rita Youseff-Price
(At 49:30 mins to 1:06 hr of video)

‘Strengthening the Cultural Responsiveness of Mainstream Health Services’ represents new work for this LHD. RHFF funds have primarily been used to employ a part-time project officer who has adopted a community development framework and co-design principles to deliver on three objectives: to co-design a Multicultural and Refugee Health Strategy, to increase engagement with migrant and refugee communities, and to increase use of healthcare interpreting services. Building local relationships, establishing regional networks and finding partners both inside and outside the health sector have been critical to success.

South Western Sydney LHD

– Golsa Saberi & Bernadette Brady
(At 1:06 hr to 1:21:30 hr of video)

The ‘Natural Helper’ project has scaled-up a successfully piloted consumer partnership model of service that engaged three CALD communities to navigate mainstream hospital services and manage their chronic conditions. The current project aims to provide cultural mentorship to CALD patients attending various clinics to achieve higher levels of activation for self-management, self-efficacy and coping skills. To date, 15 mentors have been onboarded and 62 patient participants have been recruited to the project and commenced the mentoring intervention.

The Study Protocol is available [here](#).

Round Robin

(At 1:21:30 hr to 1:42 hr of video)

Agenda

Time	Item	Presenter
Opening		
2.00	Acknowledgement of Country Welcome to RHFF Forum 2	Liz Junck, Director, Community Care and Priority Populations Unit, Health and Social Policy Branch
	Today's program	Ilse Blignault
Extended presentations		
2.10	Refugee Cancer Screening Partnership Project	Nina Hartcher & Sheetal Challam Cancer Institute NSW
2.25	Enhancing Oral Health Care for Refugees in NSW	Siobhan Kelton Centre for Oral Health Strategy
2.40	Holistic Health Care Clinic for Refugees	Michele Greenwood Mid North Coast LHD
2.55	Strengthening the Cultural Responsiveness of Main-stream Health Services in Northern NSW	Rita Youseff-Price Northern NSW LHD
3.10	The Natural Helper approach to Culturally Responsive Healthcare: a consumer-centred model of care transforming chronic disease management	Golsa Saberi & Bernadette Brady South Western Sydney LHD
Round Robin		
3.25	<p>News from other current projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HNELHD Embedding Health Equity to Regional Settlement in Armidale, Ashley Young • ISLHD Improving Refugee Children's Outcomes Now (IRCON), Leissa West (Pitts) • JHFMHN Harmony and Healing Project – developing care pathways for people with experience of torture and trauma, Jennifer Culph • MHB, 'Addi Moves' – a co-designed lifestyle program for women from a refugee or asylum seeker background, Oscar Lederman • NSLHD, Pathways to community child and family health services for Tibetan families, Cathy Butler • SESLHD/MHCS, Translated Health Resources for Refugee Communities, Sylvia Giannone • SWSLHD, The Digital Health Literacy and Refugee Project, Michael Camit • SCHN, PEACH (Providing Enhanced Access to Healthcare) Project for Refugees, Avalon Tissue • WSLHD/TMHC, Culturally Responsive Emotional Wellbeing Clinical Services for People with Refugee or Asylum Seeker Experiences, Maria Cassaniti 	
Wrap up and close		
3.35	Summary, next steps and future forums	Ilse Blignault & Nick Sandrejko
	Thanks and close	Nick Sandrejko

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