

# Interdisciplinary Health Practitioner Network

## Supporting collaboration in primary care

### Project overview

**Australia is experiencing increasing rates of chronic and complex diseases that challenge our primary care system. Thirty-five percent of Australians (over seven million people) have a chronic condition, and an increasing number have multiple conditions, making care more complex and requiring input from a number of different practitioners and agencies.**

The burden on general practitioners (GPs) is high, as the care is complicated. It takes GPs significant time to develop individual care plans and regular reviews that involve multiple providers and are patient-centred.

Research shows that when health practitioners from different disciplines collaborate and network on a regular basis, practitioner relationships develop, understanding of each other's expertise increases, improving referral pathways and patient outcomes.

#### Deliverables

Each of the five pilot practitioner networks will be established in partnership with a Primary Health Network (PHN). These are as follows:

- Murrumbidgee (NSW)
- Brisbane South (Qld)
- Eastern Melbourne (Vic)
- Adelaide (SA)
- Murray (Vic)

The network component will:

- establish a new practitioner network in partnership with each of the PHNs
- target four meetings per network (meetings held between February and December 2017)
- engage an interdisciplinary audience

The webinar component will:

- have a multimorbidity focus and complement the activity undertaken in the practitioner networks
- be targeted to a nationwide interdisciplinary audience of up to 500 participants
- provide a recording of the webinar to be hosted on an agreed website
- be scheduled for June/July 2017

#### Purpose

This project will establish locally based interdisciplinary practitioner networks and deliver one online professional development webinar to a national audience for primary care practitioners who are managing patients living with multimorbid conditions.

#### CPD

Attendance and participation in network and webinar activities will meet the self-reporting requirements for CPD recognition across the key participating professional bodies.

#### Outcomes

- Practitioners have the opportunity to access interactive, interdisciplinary professional development which addresses long-term, proactive management of multiple long-term conditions.
- Participating practitioners increase their awareness of other health professional/disciplines fields of expertise.
- Increased interdisciplinary correspondence, consultation and client referrals between participating practitioners.
- Increased interdisciplinary networking between participating practitioners.

#### Roles and responsibilities

Key to the project's success will be the contribution of the following organisations:

##### PHNs

The pilot PHN networks will provide specific guidance on the location and advice regarding local community and practitioner needs, as well as promotion to local practitioners. All PHNs will be invited to promote the online professional development webinar to practitioners in their catchment.

##### Allied Health Professions of Australia (AHPA)

As the national peak body representing 22 allied health professional associations, AHPA and its participating member organisations will provide guidance on content and participants.

## **The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)**

RACGP will provide strategic advice around promoting the active participation of GPs in the project.

## **Mental Health Professionals' Network (MHPN)**

MHPN will project manage the initiative, providing strategic advice, marketing, administrative support and funding to establish the four pilot networks and support them to meet. MHPN will also produce and market the online professional development webinar. A report evaluating the pilot will be delivered in early 2018.

## **Participating partners**

- Adelaide PHN
- Brisbane South PHN
- Eastern Melbourne PHN
- Murray PHN (Vic)
- Murrumbidgee PHN(NSW)
- Allied Health Professions of Australia (AHPA)
- Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA)
- Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA)
- Australian Psychological Society (APS)
- Australian College of Mental Health Nurses (ACMHN)
- Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA)
- Exercise & Sports Science Australia (ESSA)
- Mental Health Professionals' Network (MHPN)
- Speech Pathology Australia (SPA)
- Occupational Therapy Australia (OTA)
- Optometry Australia
- The Pharmacy Guild of Australia
- The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)
- The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW)

## **Further information**

Contact MHPN CEO Chris Gibbs on [c.gibbs@mhpn.org.au](mailto:c.gibbs@mhpn.org.au) or 03 8662 6601 for more information about the initiative.

For information about network development, contact Ingrid Benge on [i.benge@mhpn.org.au](mailto:i.benge@mhpn.org.au) or 0386626616.

## **Project developed and managed by:**

