

GENERAL PRACTICE NETWORK LEADERSHIP GROUP (GPNLG)

COMMUNIQUE

The Network's blueprint for Primary Health Care Organisations (PHCOs) *Connecting Care: A blueprint for improving the health and wellbeing of the Australian population*, Indigenous health, eHealth and mental health were key priorities for the General Practice Network Leadership Group (GPNLG) when it met in Canberra in late November.

GPNLG consists of the elected Chairs and CEOs of the eight state and territory based organisations (SBOs) and the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN).

Network's PHCO Blueprint

GPNLG members provided final input and comment into the Network's blueprint for PHCOs, a valuable contribution to the final version which was provided to the Minister's office to inform the Australian Government's policy development in response to the national health reform agenda. This document can be downloaded from the members' only area of the AGPN website at: <http://www.agpn.com.au/members-area/ceos-and-chairs-area/document-library>.

GPNLG discussed in length the potential transitioning of Network Members into PHCOs. External, independent consultancy services were considered to assist in the development of a Network transition plan and conduct a boundary mapping exercise (in collaboration with Network Members). The group's next priority is to develop a Network work plan for the next two-to-three years that will continue to strengthen the Network.

GPNLG is committed to working through existing state/territory meetings to continue conversations with general practice networks (divisions) about the future role of the Network in national health reform.

Indigenous health

Department of Health and Ageing officials attended the meeting on day one to gather SBO input and feedback on the Closing the Gap Care Coordination and Supplementary Services program. Issues discussed included models of care, fundholding arrangements, demand management, mentoring and support for the proposed new roles and the strong need for alignment between the various *Closing the Gap* initiatives.

Cultural safety training for staff and a common needs assessment tool were identified as a priority for the Network moving forward with the GPNLG positioned to progress work in this area in the coming months.

GPNLG agreed that building capacity in both the mainstream and community-controlled sector was imperative to the success of the initiative and to have a significant impact on the health of Indigenous Australians.

eHealth

GPNLG were briefed on the progress of a number of key eHealth initiatives including the progress of the National E-Health Strategy. The National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) has signalled that the Network could have a role in the implementation of the strategy in general practice. GPNLG will invite key NEHTA personnel to present to the group at its first meeting in 2010.

The General Practice Data Governance Council is establishing a framework for participating practices on general practice data collection and the secondary use of data. The new body, which has representatives from the peak general practice organisations including AGPN, is continuing to work closely with NEHTA and the Safety and Quality Commission on key eHealth issues in general practice.

Over the past six months, GP Census has been implemented in five states with responses gathered from 2534 GPs, 934 practices and 30 participating general practice networks. A national advisory committee will be formed in 2010 to ensure national governance in the use of the web-based survey tool and data captured to further tailor user experience and Network Member requirements. Further information can be downloaded at: <http://www.agpn.com.au/gpcensus>.

Mental health

GPNLG discussed the draft proposal to government recommending the alignment and amalgamation of the National Primary Mental Health Care Network and the Primary Health Care Comorbidity Network Pilot Program into a single program. The proposed new program will provide national leadership for primary mental health care activity across the Network with a particular focus on primary mental health care service development and

multidisciplinary mental health education. Provision of support for general practice networks and general practice will remain a priority.

Departmental update

Senior officials from the Department of Health and Ageing attended the meeting on day two to provide an update to the GPNLG. A number of key issues pertinent to the Network were raised by SBOs including:

- Impact on program/service delivery that the delay in receipt of program funding has on Network Members
- Increasing costs of annual accreditation fees and financial audit fees for each program
- Need for standard financial terminology and reporting standards in line with prevailing accounting standards across all departmental programs.

Other matters

A range of strategic issues and operational matters put forward by members were also discussed including agreement by the group to:

- Draft correspondence to the government, including a national pandemic evaluation report, requesting a debrief meeting and the review of the primary health care annex of the national pandemic plan
- Consider a national approach to population health profiling at a general practice network, state/territory and national level
- Seek Network views on the proposed content of the Network's Federal Budget submission.

For further information on the meeting outcomes please contact your SBO.