Celebrations at Healthy Happy Beginnings

Refugee week is an annual week-long celebration of the positive contributions that people of refugee background make to Australian society. Hundreds of events are held around Australia, including concerts, fundraisers, film screenings and more.

The team providing the Werribee-based program Healthy Happy Beginnings celebrated refugee week by sharing lunch together. Waan, the program’s refugee mentor (bicultural worker) read a book to everyone (women and staff) about the plight of the Karen people and their journey to Melbourne. The women shared their stories of the time they had spent in refugee camps, detention centres, and transiting through other countries. We learnt a song in Karen that was about non-discrimination and accepting everyone for their differences no matter what race, religion culture. As a gesture of thanks to the staff for providing the program tailored to the needs of Karen women, a gift was provided to staff – a traditional sarong. Enjoying lunch together was a fitting way to work towards the key aims of Healthy Happy Beginnings, to increase health professional’s knowledge and cultural awareness, and to foster the inclusion and sense of belonging for Karen women and their families in Melbourne’s west.

Building on the MATCH project: a success story

The MATCH program of work has been designed to use existing resources and dovetail existing processes to create better linkages between Maternity and Maternal and Child Health services to ensure women and families of refugee background remain engaged when transitioning from hospital care into the community.

MATCH has continued to build on its success with a new project where women of refugee background are identified in extended postnatal care (EPC) at Dandenong Hospital and referred to City of Greater Dandenong maternal and child health (MCH) has begun. The EPC coordinators and MCH nurses have shared positive feedback commenting that the referral was “easy to do” and that the process “worked really well”; that it is a good way to ensure women “don’t slip through the cracks”.

The process worked well, demonstrated by a referral for an asylum seeker woman and her family who have since seen the maternal and child health service twice. The working group are harnessing the enthusiasm of the staff and upscaling the project to the rest of the EPC team coordinators at Dandenong. Next steps include refining process of referrals of pregnant women in the MCH service into maternity care at Dandenong Hospital.
Introducing John Antonopoulos

John Antonopoulos is the Operations Manager for interpreters at Monash Health, a member of the working group involved in the successful Bridging the Gap Language in Labour quality improvement project, and a member of the working group and facilitator for Bridging the Gap professional development. We asked John:

What does your role involve?

Patients who have low English proficiency often struggle to comprehend information communicated to them in a health setting. My role involves leading a team of dedicated interpreters and administrative personnel who have the responsibility over the provision of language services across Dandenong Hospital, Casey Hospital, 122 Thomas St and Cranbourne Integrated Care Centre.

Our team seeks to ensure that patients whose preferred language is one other than English are able to access to timely language services. I seek to continually improve upon the provision of languages services to culturally and linguistically diverse patients. I also lead and promote cultural awareness and interpreter awareness workshops for Monash Health highlighting its positive impact on patient care and outcomes.

What aspects of your role are you proud of?

I am particularly proud of the difference that our team makes in providing a ‘voice’ for those patients who cannot communicate in English when they access health care services at Monash Health. This has been in part achieved by developing a web based Interpreter Booking system, which seeks to centralise the provision of all interpreter requests to better cater to patients language needs across Monash Health.

I have also developed an online interpreter awareness training tool to allow staff at any point in time to complete with a certificate of successful completion provided upon the passing of a quiz.

What are your hopes for Bridging the Gap?

I truly hope that the hard work undertaken with Bridging the Gap will translate into long term improvements to patient care for refugees and asylum seekers both now and into the future. The evidence demonstrates that when patients receive information in their preferred language they are more involved in their care and have better health outcomes.
Resources for learning and inspiration

There is a plethora of information and resources out there to inspire; whether it be with regards to the science of quality improvement, applying that science to strengthen future health systems for population health and equity, or opportunities to learn and reflect on your work with families of refugee background; we thought we would share just a few with you:

**IHI – the Institute for Healthcare Improvement**

This is a wonderful resource for information about transforming health through quality improvement. Focussing on the science of quality improvement and with case studies, tools and resources, and free online tutorials to explain the fundamentals, this web-resource and collaborative is a great place to learn how to nurture an environment of change. We found this page a good place to start:
http://www.ihi.org/resources/Pages/HowtoImprove/default.aspx

**The Health Foundation**

Is a UK-based initiative that aims to build skills and knowledge to bring about systems change for population health. Whilst being NHS focussed there are some great shared learnings that make this site worth checking out and subscribing to:
http://www.health.org.uk/

**Foundation House professional development**

A program of professional development for the second half of 2016 is now available. With courses covering practitioner self-care and the refugee and asylum seeker experience, please see here for more information and registration details:

Bridging the Gap is also pleased to announce another day of professional development in the south east. The day will be held on Friday 7th October at City of Greater Dandenong Civic Offices. Please email bridgingthegap@mcri.edu.au for more details.

**Refugee and asylum seeker settlement in Victoria: FAQs for key services and sector partners – DHHS**

In recognition of the recent national immigration and policy changes, the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services have developed a resource to support those working in refugee and asylum seeker health. Bridging the Gap is mentioned amongst other key service and sector partners working in this space. Please see here for more: http://bit.ly/2ajNKbE

**About Bridging the Gap**

Bridging the Gap is a partnership between Healthy Mothers Healthy Families research group at Murdoch Childrens Research Institute and the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House), maternity and maternal & child health services in Melbourne’s south east and west, primary health care networks, local and state government.

Bridging the Gap is supported by contributions from the partner organisations and a partnership grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council (2013-2017).

For more information about Bridging the Gap: https://www.mcri.edu.au/bridging-the-gap

This newsletter has been prepared by the Healthy Mothers Healthy Families research group at MCRI. For more information please contact:

Wendy Dawson  
wendy.dawson@mcri.edu.au  ☎️ 9936 6051

Dannielle Vanpraag  
dannielle.vanpraag@mcri.edu.au  ☎️ 9936 6084

Elisha Riggs  
elisha.riggs@mcri.edu.au  ☎️ 9936 6646

Jane Yelland  
jane.yelland@mcri.edu.au  ☎️ 9936 6673