

International Federation of Community Health Centres and Community Health Australia

2 August 2013

At the VHA Rural and Community Health Conference on Wednesday 31 July, Trevor Carr announced the launch of the International Federation of Community Health Centres (IFCHC) and Community Health Australia (CHA).

IFCHC

The IFCHC has evolved from a 2011 memorandum of understanding between the American National Association for Community Health Centres, Canadian Association of Community Health Centers and the European Forum for Primary Care.

The VHA, through its wholly owned subsidiary, CHA, has joined with its North American and European colleagues to form the IFCHC.

The IFCHC's broad aim is to achieve the following objectives:

- To increase the awareness and visibility of Community Health Centres (CHCs) around the world
- To advance the understanding and alignment of the CHC model of care with the World Health Organisation's definition and vision of primary care
- To increase the adoption of the CHC model of care within contemporary health system design around the globe, which includes establishing new CHCs as state of the art healthcare facilities
- To increase the research and evidence base that underscores the value of CHCs
- To increase the scope of governance and operational tools available to CHCs to advance safety and quality in the provision of services
- To support individual CHCs in their respective processes of continuous quality improvement
- And to facilitate advocacy in support of CHCs directed at local, state and national governments, and at private sources and the general public

A copy of the IFCHC constitution has been attached to this Bulletin and will give greater detail about the aims and membership criteria of the Federation.

The IFCHC website can be accessed here: www.ifchc2013.org.

CHA

The CHA is a new organisation that not only facilitates an Australian representation on the IFCHC, but creates an opportunity for a nation-wide association specific to CHCs.



CHA is in its infancy and has a still to be determined membership, governance structure and activity focus; however the VHA sees it as an excellent opportunity for Victorian community health providers to advocate for this model nationally.

The constitution of the IFCHC sets out a series of eligibility criteria for the definition of a “community health centre”, and it is likely that a similar set of requirements will be applied for potential members of CHA. The key criteria are as follows:

- CHCs deliver integrated, comprehensive, people-centred primary health care, through an interprofessional team that addresses aspects of both health and wellbeing
- Clinical primary care services at CHCs address aspects of health promotion and illness prevention, curative care and rehabilitation, using a holistic frame of reference and are oriented towards the needs of individuals, families, populations and communities
- The CHC primary care team integrates into its daily activities, attention to the broader causes of illness, and looks at the social determinants of health, addressing them through intersectoral cooperation
- CHCs develop a community-oriented primary care strategy, blending skills for individual health care with approaches focused on public health
- CHCs have a commitment to equity and social inclusion and put emphasis on access to health care (with special attention given to the most vulnerable), and on respect for fundamental human rights
- CHCs place a strong emphasis on community engagement and civic participation in health and health care, which may, but does not necessarily include participation of clients/patients and other community members in governance of the healthcare organisation
- CHCs contribute to universal coverage and are strongly committed to being accessible for individuals and families, irrespective of race, religion, social status and other factors, including ability to pay for care
- CHCs engage in processes of continuous quality improvement, starting from the needs of individuals and patients that they are serving
- CHCs take responsibility for a defined population that can be geographically-determined or defined by population group(s)

Next steps

The VHA will be consulting with its members to help guide the initial direction that CHA will take. This will extend to membership, governance and activities of the organisation, and determining how it will contribute to the aims and aspirations of the IFCHC.

For expressions of interest, please contact **Chris Templin** at chris.templin@vha.org.au.

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