

POPULATION HEALTH APPROACHES TO PLANNING

FOR THE VICTORIAN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

—VHA/MONASH UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PROJECT—

The VHA has commissioned Professor Helen Keleher and her health sciences team at Monash University to undertake a large scale population health research project. This project *"Population health approaches to planning for the Victorian healthcare system"* aims to support healthcare agencies across Victoria to build their skills **in**, and understanding **of**, population health approaches to planning.

This research project will define a common language, purpose, and identify the current barriers to population health approaches to planning in Victoria. It will also develop a tailored framework and toolbox of resources to support and guide the healthcare sector to play a leading role in moving to population health approaches to planning at local, regional or statewide levels. It provides an opportunity to make inroads into both preventing and managing a range of health conditions, as well as promoting better health in the general population.

INTRODUCTION

Population health approaches to planning are robust and proven, based firmly on evidence to guide decision making. Population health approaches to planning offer a blueprint for the massive paradigm shift required for the healthcare system to better address three of the most important contemporary health issues:

- Rising rates of chronic conditions
- An ageing population
- Increasingly poor health status of minority and disadvantaged groups

It provides the vehicle to steer the health system toward addressing these contemporary issues and away from the historical focus on communicable disease and throughput targets.

This approach to planning draws on evidence of the broader needs of populations. It is grounded in the social model of health and considers the linkages between the determinants of health and the requirements of high-need and /or minority populations. It uses integrated, collaborative processes to ensure services work together to address the issues of their communities to achieve real health improvement. It is applicable to planning processes of single agencies, or across local, regional or state-wide areas. Importantly, population health approaches to planning offer an opportunity to guide innovation by continuing to seek evidence of the new and changing needs of populations.

Initial research undertaken by the VHA and Monash University has shown that current population health practice is fragmented. There are two commonly identified reasons for this fragmentation. First, the variation in the understanding and capacity of individuals and agencies to adopt population health approaches to planning. Second, there is a lack of coherent and consistently applied frameworks to guide planning. Addressing these two issues is the focus of the VHA/Monash University project.

The Victorian Healthcare Association

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project will:

1. Articulate the meaning and purpose of population health approaches to planning including defining associated terms
2. Identify the current misalignment of population health policy and planning practices
3. Support the Victorian health system to develop its capacity to undertake population health approaches to planning at agency, local, regional and statewide levels, by:
 - i. Providing resources and guides for population health approaches to planning
 - ii. Documenting preferred data sources, their relevance, and how to access and utilise them
4. Provide the VHA with strong independent research-based evidence to:
 - i. Advocate across government for improved policy, investment and support for the health sector's venture into 'best practice' population health approaches to planning
 - ii. Raise the media profile of population health approaches to planning and its associated benefits for health outcomes in the community
5. Develop resources to strengthen the capacity of the health workforce by increasing their knowledge and skill in integrated population health approaches to service planning

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

The project deliverables will include:

1. A position statement for use by the VHA and the Victorian health sector that will include relevant definitions and clearly articulate policy and other barriers to successful population health approaches to planning
2. A toolbox of population health approaches to planning for use by agencies in their planning activities, including identification of relevant data sources and how to utilise them
3. A practical guide for meeting current population health accreditation criteria and a strategy to improve the incorporation of population health approaches within accreditation frameworks (e.g. EQuIP, QICSA)
4. Development of a set of case study resources that highlight the findings of the project, support application of the toolbox and guide best practice population health approaches

PROJECT TEAM

MONASH UNIVERSITY

Department of Health Social Science

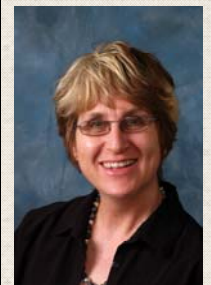
Professor Helen Keleher - Head of Department , Dr Nikos Thomacos - Senior Lecturer,
Dr Charles Livingstone - Senior Lecturer, Dr Tsharni Zazryn- Lecturer,
Tess Tsindos - Research Fellow

VICTORIAN HEALTHCARE ASSOCIATION

Sara Duncan - Research and Policy Manager, Kylee Shiel - Research and Policy Officer,
Matt Cameron - Research and Policy Officer, Felix Pintado - Board Director

STEERING COMMITTEE

VHA Population Health & Area-based Planning (PHAP) Working Group - VHA member agencies,
VicHealth, General Practice Victoria, Municipal Association Victoria, Department of Human Services Public & Primary Health metropolitan & regional branches, Primary Care Partnerships



Prof Helen Keleher

PROJECT TIMELINES

The project will begin in July 2009 and be completed by June 2010 with initial findings presented at the VHA Population Health Approaches to Planning Forum on 27 November 2009.

For more information contact Kylee Shiel at the Victorian Healthcare Association on 9094 7777, kylee.shiel@vha.org.au or visit the VHA website www.vha.org.au.



The Victorian Healthcare Association

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