



MULTICULTURAL HEALTH WEEK 2019 #MulticulturalHealthWeek19

THEME: HEALTH LITERACY FOR NEW AND EMERGING COMMUNITIES

KEY FACTS FOR MEDIA:

- Nearly one in three residents of NSW was born overseas and around 1 in 5 speaks a language other than English. Multicultural Health Week is a week that reminds NSW health services and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities and the media that reaches them of the importance of providing equitable access to information and resources to Australians whose first language may not be English.
- NSW is home to almost 7.5 million people, 28% of whom were born overseas and 25% of whom speak a language other than English at home. Between 2011 and 2016, the number of people who speak a language other than English at home increased by over 325,000.
- The NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service (MHCS) is the coordinating agency for the NSW Ministry of Health of Multicultural Health Week since 2009 in partnership with the Multicultural Health Services from Local Health Districts.
- Dr Kerry Chant, Deputy Secretary, Population and Public Health and Chief Health will launch Multicultural Health Week 2019 on Monday 2 September at the NSW Parliament House.
- The theme for Multicultural Health Week is: **Health Literacy of new and emerging communities**.
- Examples of new and emerging language groups across the state include communities who speak Bangla, Kurdish Kurmanji, Mongolian, Nepali, Tamil, Tibetan and Urdu.
- The aim of Multicultural Health Week this year is to address the health needs of new and emerging communities to ensure equitable access to health care and health information for these communities.
- Health literacy is at the heart of NSW Health Plan for Healthy Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities. This plan serves as a road map for NSW Health services to ensure culturally and linguistically diverse communities have equitable access to health services that are culturally responsive, safe and of high quality.



New and emerging communities are defined as communities which are:

- Recently settled compared with more established culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities;
- Smaller in number of residents but with significant increase in the past 5 to 10 years;
- Lacking sufficient infrastructure and resources compared with more established CALD communities;
- Experiencing significant barriers in accessing health care and/or poorer health outcomes; and
- Isolated in their geographical area.

New and emerging communities are also those:

- with a small population
- where the majority of members are recent arrivals to Australia
- where the majority of members entered through Australia’s humanitarian program lacking established family networks, support systems, community structures and resources relative to more established communities
- facing challenges settling in Australia and needing additional support and resources

Members of these communities typically experience at least two of the following settlement challenges:

- low levels of English language proficiency although multilingual in other languages
- low or no literacy in their main language due to a range of factors:
 - low levels of education and skill due to extended periods in refugee camps
 - unfamiliarity with Australian urban living experiences of torture and trauma prior to arrival in Australia
 - health problems due to lack of health care in their home country or refugee camps
 - visible difference isolation and social exclusion
 - susceptibility to unemployment and under-employment.



Population needs

- The population served by NSW Health includes 25% of residents who speak a language other than English (LOTE) at home, including a sign language (ABS, 2016). Of those who speak a LOTE at home, it is estimated that 4.5% do not speak English well or at all (ABS, 2016).
- The cultural and language backgrounds of the population shape individual perceptions of health, health care, willingness and confidence to engage with health services as well as the likelihood that individuals will comprehend and comply with post discharge follow up and/or ongoing treatment.
- The 2006 ABS Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey identified that health literacy was lower in people born overseas in a mainly non-English speaking country (26%) than people born in Australia or mainly English speaking countries (46%) (ABS, 2006).
- In Australia, 60% of people who access health services have low health literacy. Three quarters of people with low health literacy are born in a mainly non-English speaking country (ABS, 2006).

Low rates of health literacy have been associated with:

- increased hospital admissions and readmissions;
- poorer medication adherence;
- less participation in prevention activities;
- higher prevalence of health risk factors;
- poorer self-management of chronic diseases and poorer disease outcomes;
- less effective communication with health care professionals;
- increased health care costs;
- lower functional status; and
- increased mortality

Resources produced for Multicultural Health Week 2019:

- A poster in English promoting the week
- Local health literacy projects and awareness activities undertaken by Multicultural Health Services at Local Health Districts and partner organisations
- Information sheets for health professionals working with people from new and emerging communities tailored for each Local Health District across NSW and provide:
 - Demographic information on new and emerging communities
 - Key contacts within each Local Health District
 - Strategies for addressing the health literacy needs within new and emerging communities
 - Resources for health professionals



- Resources for communities which include an eight minute video on Accessing health care in Australia has been developed in over 20 languages, including some of the newest languages spoken in NSW.
 - The videos contain introductory information on the role of General Practitioners, Medicare and Health Care cards, use of professional interpreters in health settings, the role of the Emergency Department and how and when to call an Ambulance.
 - See link to the video in Arabic, Assyrian, Bengali (Bangla), Burmese, Dari, English, Indonesian, Korean, Kurmanji, Spanish, Portuguese, Nepali, Mongolian, Mandarin, Swahili, Tamil, Thai, Tibetan, Urdu:

<http://www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au/events/multicultural-health-week/access-to-health-care-in-australia>

- Information sheets in over 20 languages are also available to support people's understanding of the health care system.

All of the resources are available on the www.multiculturalhealthweek.com and are freely available for use.

Winners of the NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service (MHCS) Awards to recognise excellence in multilingual health communication have also been announced during Multicultural Health Week 2019.

Resources produced by the winners and finalists will be available on the MHCS website - www.mhcs.health.nsw.gov.au

See attached Multicultural Health Week 2019 Media Release and List of MHCS Award Winners.

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