

Improving Aboriginal health

In recognition of the recent achievements of the Close the Gap campaign, this issue of *AHR* contains a set of papers focusing on Aboriginal health. At the national Indigenous Health Equality Summit in Canberra in March 2008, the Close the Gap Statement of Intent was signed. This Statement of Intent requires the government, health and social service agencies and the Aboriginal communities to work together to achieve equality in health status and life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by the year 2030. (See <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/Social_Justice/health/statement_intent.html>)

The first three papers present important policy lessons. Matthews and her colleagues stress the need to strengthen the link between policy formulation and implementation (*page 613*). Their study found that the lack of progress in improving Aboriginal health may be the result of lack of Indigenous involvement in policy formulation at the senior Australian Government level, limited participation of Indigenous community controlled health organisations in the policy making process and insufficient resources for implementation. Anderson, Anderson and Smylie outline the achievements of the National Indigenous Health Performance Measurement System (*page 626*), and change management lessons from Aboriginal community controlled health organisations are discussed by Leanne Coombe from the Apunipima Cape York Health Council (*page 639*). Other papers with a focus on Aboriginal health include a review of emergency department access (*page 648*), overseas-trained doctors working in rural and remote Aboriginal health settings (*page 655*) and eye health programs within remote Aboriginal communities (*page 664*).

Other papers in this issue

The other papers address health service utilisation, aspects of human resources management and the development of information systems to inform health sector planning and management. The health service utilisation aspects include (*page 677*) the use of the Charlson comorbidity index to predict

readmissions for patients with elective coronary artery bypass surgery (CABG), a paper that suggests that older carers' access to community services is similar in rural and urban areas (*page 684*) and three papers related to emergency departments (*pages 700, 691 and 710*). Bagley and Lin provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of public health systems research, with recommendations for the future (*page 721*).

Firth, Mellor and Francis discuss the negative impact on nurses of information system mal-alignment with public hospital strategic goals (*page 733*) and Scott provides a timely review of pay for performance programs (*page 740*).

The health information papers include a report on the development of the access display information system that provides real-time information on access to hospital services (*page 750*), a study that suggested that 51% of patient respondents felt that their inability to speak English negatively affected their hospital stay (*page 755*), additional information on the WA data linkage system (*page 766*) and a review of methods used to project sub-acute care (*page 778*).

Call for student papers

I am pleased to announce the *AHR* 2008 Student Paper Awards. Please look for the call for papers on *page 625*. The purpose of these Awards is to support and encourage excellence in health policy and management research and writing at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and we look forward to receiving some interesting papers.

Thanks again to *AHR* reviewers

Once again, as the year come to a close, on behalf of all of our authors, I would like to thank all of our volunteer reviewers. Each year, more practitioners, academics and students give their time to provide useful review of the manuscripts submitted to *Australian Health Review*, and we are very grateful for their contributions.

Sandra G Leggat

Editor, *Australian Health Review*