

The Second International Primary Health Care 2000 Conference drew together leading policy makers and experienced practitioners from Canada, the United Kingdom, South Africa, New Zealand and all States of Australia to explore primary health care service models and programs emerging in response to the economic and social pressures of the twenty-first century.

The Conference provided many opportunities for approximately one thousand participants to network and to share their experiences. In addition to the plenary addresses, over 250 papers and workshops on primary and community health issues were presented. The selected Conference papers in this issue of the *Australian Journal of Primary Health* bring together many of the key presentations made throughout and provide an important record of the Conference.

A key challenge ahead is to integrate primary care and community based services so that a robust community based service system is developed to play a key role in health promotion and prevention strategies that over time will reduce the need for tertiary intervention. To achieve this goal, there must be a transparent government investment strategy that increases the percentage of total health expenditure to primary and community based health services. It will also be necessary for communities to understand that a robust primary health care focused service system has the capacity to develop and maintain healthy communities.

Conferences such as the International Primary Health Care Conference provide important opportunities for research to be presented that demonstrates the important achievements that have been made by the primary and community health sectors in improving the health of their communities. It allows us also to share the lessons that have been learnt.

It is crucial that the health system increasingly places a focus on health promotion and disease prevention activities to provide timely, appropriate and cost effective community care.

Ms Carol Kushner one of the keynote speakers at the Conference identified how, in order to improve the health of communities, primary and community health providers need to:

- identify all patients with chronic conditions and/or risk factors, set up formal systems for monitoring and recall in patients if they miss appointments, and provide targeted health promotion and disease prevention activities to this at risk group;
- educate patients on self and family care;
- emphasise the appropriate use of medications, and therapies, including the integration of client preferences;
- coordinate and integrate care delivered by specialists, hospitals and social service agencies;
- ensure a quick response if the patient destabilised and
- create opportunities for community and patient participation.

The challenges ahead in undertaking these roles are many. The Victorian Healthcare Association believes that publications such as this have an important role to play in documenting effective strategies in health promotion and disease management. The Association is pleased to have been associated with the Conference and strongly supports the *Australian Journal of Primary Health*.

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