

## EDITORIAL

*The Australian Journal of Primary Health - Interchange* was launched on 11 December 1995 by the Honourable Mr Rob Knowles, Victorian Minister for Aged Care, and Ms Kerry Ferguson, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, and chaired by Ms Shirley Freeman, President of the Victorian Community Health Association and President of the Australian Community Health Association.

Primary health care is a major component of the government strategy of co-ordinated care, and Mr Knowles said at the launch that the journal represents a timely and significant response to changes in the health sector, including issues of cost-effective management, and the early identification, early intervention, and appropriate treatment of disease. He pointed out that an effective primary health care system is particularly important for the aged care sector in order to divert people (where possible) from the secondary and tertiary services, which are not only more expensive, but also more invasive. Further, that the most significant role of primary health care is in maintaining health and enhancing wellbeing: 'information, health skills and public health protection measures, can maintain good health'.

Ms Freeman emphasised the relevance of the journal to innovation in service delivery, and to developments in professional practice. The primary health care approach aims to achieve a health system which is accessible and responsive to all, and the journal is an innovative means for the increased dissemination of knowledge in the area, with an emphasis on research, practice, and policy developments.

In launching the journal, the Dean pointed out that the Faculty of Health Sciences at La Trobe University has a long history of education and research in primary health care, and the combination of this expertise with that of the Community Health Association, would enable the journal to be relevant, accessible, and immediate for practitioners and academics. The Dean

concluded that the journal, by establishing strong links with community health organisations conforms to the objectives of the University and of the Faculty to provide research, teaching and community service.

Consistent with the aims of the Journal, the launch was attended by representatives of the community, the Australian and Victorian Community Health Associations, primary health care practitioners and administrators, public servants and policy advisers, and members of the Advisory Committee, Editorial Board, and the University. The enthusiastic atmosphere was testament to the dedication of primary health practitioners and their acceptance of their increasing importance in the health sector.

Primary health care practitioners have also accepted the importance and relevance of *best practice*, and have adopted its principles in their work. In recognition of this and from a belief that primary health care has much to offer the health sector as a whole, this issue of the journal is devoted to *best practice*.

Just as the term *best practice* has become ubiquitous, so has its application, and the articles cover a diverse range from research on best practice interventions, through its policy and professional implications, to examples of best practice interventions.

I should like to express my appreciation to Russell Renhard, Director Victorian Community Health Standards Program, for his expert editorial assistance for this special issue, and to Paul Butler, Centre for Development and Innovation in Health, and to their authors, for permission to publish selected papers from the 1994 Awards for Innovation and Excellence in Primary Health Care.

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