Message from the chief nursing and midwifery officer – March 2016

It is just over six months since I commenced in the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer role and much has happened in that time! The significant level of reform across health care presents us, as nurses and midwives, with both opportunities and challenges. While the contribution that nurses and midwives can make should not be underestimated, we must all be prepared to look at different ways of working and engaging with consumers. At times, this may require us to live with a level of discomfort but, without this, it is unlikely we will make progress. I look forward to working with you in this innovative and exciting period of change, and in the meantime, please think about the different ways nurses and midwives can contribute to the wide-ranging reform agenda.

Greater choices in home care

The Australian Government announced significant reforms to home care in the 2015-16 Budget. The reforms will improve the way that home care services are delivered to older Australians. The reforms will be implemented in two stages.

In the first stage, from February 2017, funding for a home care package will follow the consumer. This will allow a consumer to choose a provider that is suited to them and to direct the funding to that provider. The consumer will also be able to change their provider if they wish, including if they move to another area to live. There will be a consistent national approach to prioritising access to home care through the My Aged Care gateway.

The second stage will build on these changes by integrating the Home Care Packages Programme and the Commonwealth Home Support Programme into a single care at home programme. This will further simplify the way that services are delivered and funded. The Government intends to introduce the new integrated programme from July 2018.

These changes are an important step in moving towards a future aged care system that is more consumer-driven, market-based and less regulated.

For further information, please visit the Aged Care Reform website.

Hepatitis C

The Australian Government will invest more-than $1 billion to give all Australians with Hepatitis C access to breakthrough medications that could all but eradicate the deadly and debilitating disease within a generation. The Minister for Health Sussan Ley recently announced Australia would become one of the first in the world to publicly subsidise these medications – currently costing patients up to $100,000 – for the nation’s entire population of Hepatitis C sufferers, no matter what their condition or how they contracted it. Ms Ley said there were about 700 deaths attributable to chronic Hepatitis C infection each year, with thousands more suffering a variety of serious liver diseases and conditions. There are currently more-than 230,000 Australians estimated to be living with Hepatitis C. This announcement sees the listing of multiple drug combinations made available to the entire patient population through the PBS from 1 March 2016. The medicines are: Sofosbuvir with ledipasvir (Harvoni); Sofosbuvir (Sovaldi); Daclatasvir (Daklinza); and Ribavirin (Ibavir). Please visit the PBS website for further information.

Zika virus

Zika is a mosquito borne virus that is closely related to dengue and also yellow fever. Zika can be found in animals in many parts of Asia and Africa without any outbreaks in humans. Zika virus is carried by the mosquitoes Aedes aegyptii and/or Aedes albopictus, both of which are also the Dengue mosquito, and they are found in North and Central Queensland. Between 2013 and 2015 there were large outbreaks of Zika in a number of Pacific countries, and in 2015 and 2016, large outbreaks have occurred and are ongoing in Central and South American countries. Recent outbreaks in the Pacific and Central and South America have raised concerns that Zika might cause certain birth defects if the woman gets Zika while pregnant, but further studies are required to prove that Zika is the cause and to understand how and when it may be passed on to the baby. Please
visit the Department’s website to access further information on Zika virus. In particular, I would like to draw your attention to three documents:

- Interim guidelines for management of pregnant women with Zika virus exposure
- Interim recommendations for reducing the risk of sexual transmission of Zika virus
- Information for travellers about Zika virus testing

**Early advice on the 2016 seasonal influenza vaccine**

Vaccination remains the best protection we have against influenza. You, as nurses and midwives, play a key role in informing the community about risks from influenza and of the importance of influenza vaccination. Key features of the 2016 National Immunisation Program influenza vaccine include that:

- Influenza vaccines will be available from early April 2016 subject to vaccination supply;
- Two age-specific quadrivalent influenza vaccines will be available free of charge to eligible people under the National Immunisation Program; and
- Both quadrivalent influenza vaccines and trivalent influenza vaccines are available for purchase on the private market.

Under the National Immunisation Program, the following groups are eligible to receive the free influenza vaccine:

- Pregnant women;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged six months to less than five years;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years of age and over;
- People aged 65 years and over;
- People aged six months and over with medical conditions predisposing them to severe influenza.

Please familiarise yourself with the advice on the administration of seasonal influenza vaccines, which is available on the [Immunise Australia website](#).

**NMBA update**

On 1 February, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) released the following revised registration standards, guidelines and standards for practice:

- Registration standard: Continuing professional development (CPD)
- Registration standard: Recency of practice
- Registration standard: Professional indemnity insurance (PII) arrangements
- Registration standard: Endorsement as a nurse practitioner
- Registration standard: Endorsement for scheduled medicines for midwives
- Safety and quality guidelines for privately practising midwives
- Registered nurse standards for practice

These revised standards and guidelines have been released to provide nurses and midwives including key stakeholders, sufficient time to understand the updated requirements set by the NMBA. For further information, please visit Revised Standards section of the NMBA’s website.

**Primary Health Networks (PHNs)**

The Australian Government is committed to delivering an efficient and effective primary health care system through the establishment of PHNs. Evidence indicates that health systems with strong integrated primary health care at their core are both effective in improving patient outcomes and experiences and efficient at delivering appropriate services where they are needed most. On 1 July 2015, 31 PHNs were established to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for patients, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes, and to improve coordination of care to ensure patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time. PHNs will achieve these objectives by working directly with general practitioners, other primary health care providers, secondary care providers and hospitals to facilitate improved outcomes for patients. The Government has agreed to six key priorities for targeted work by PHNs. These are mental health, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, population health, health workforce, eHealth and aged care. For further information on PHNs, please visit the PHN website. Also, the PHN circulars may also be of interest.

**Reminder – Global Nursing Leadership Institute**

ICN will hold the next annual Global Nursing Leadership Institute (GNLI) at the Chateau de Bossey near Geneva Switzerland from 17-23 September 2016. The 2016 ICN GNLI theme is the “Nursing opportunities in a world focused on sustainable development.” Please click here to access the application form and further information about the GNLI.
Can you name a symptom of ovarian cancer?

Minister for Health Sussan Ley has highlighted a new social media awareness campaign as an important initiative to improve women’s knowledge and awareness of ovarian cancer. Marking Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month this February, Cancer Australia has launched a new online resource ‘No one knows your body like you do’ to raise awareness and help women identify the symptoms of ovarian cancer. According to Ms Ley “the symptoms of ovarian cancer can be vague and similar to other common conditions - this awareness campaign through Facebook, Twitter and YouTube educates us on what to look for.”

Can you name a symptom of ovarian cancer? Put your knowledge to the test with a quiz at the Cancer Australia YouTube channel. Please share the new awareness campaign at Cancer Australia’s: Twitter or Facebook. And for more information about gynaecological cancers, including ovarian cancer, please visit the Cancer Australia website.

Final report of the review or organ and tissue donation and transplantation

The Minister for Rural Health, Senator the Hon Fiona Nash, announced the public release of the Final Report of the Review of organ and tissue donation and transplantation on 2 February 2016. The Review’s Final Report, conducted by Ernst and Young, examines the effectiveness of the implementation of the national reform agenda on organ and tissue donation and transplantation. Please click here to access the report.

Final report of the national ice taskforce

In December 2015, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet released the final report of the National Ice Taskforce. Please click here to access the report.

Publications


Mailbox

If you have any feedback or would like to contact the Office of the Chief Nurse and Midwifery Officer, please email the new, central CNMO mailbox.