“Toward developing national and international priorities for migration, health and social wellbeing”

MELBOURNE DECLARATION ON BUILDING INTEGRATION AND REDUCING MIGRATION RELATED HEALTH INEQUITY

13 February 2015
Preamble

*We acknowledge the Wurundjeri clan who are the custodians of the land, on which this declaration and gathering takes place and we pay our respects to their elders past and present.*

Immigration brings many healthcare challenges for migrants. The health status of migrants and their access to health care is influenced by their channel of migration (i.e. voluntary, humanitarian, or asylum seeker entrants), language proficiency and circumstances in their countries of origin. Immigration also presents challenges to the health systems of the host country in the delivery of culturally competent health and social services. A lack of accessible and appropriate services can lead to disparities in health status between the migrant and host populations. Health inequities are also fuelled by inequalities in income, access to education and employment and reduced social support networks.

This declaration calls on the Australian government to protect the health of, ensure health service provision for and reduce health inequities of migrants (including forced and undocumented migrants) and refugees. As members of the public health community, we recognise and advocate for the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups, including migrants, ethnic minorities, refugees and asylum seekers, within the Australian community.

The declaration is aiming to:

a) Inform the development of guidelines for reducing CALD, migrant, refugee and asylum seeker health inequity;
b) Inform the provision of culturally appropriate health care, health programs and services for CALD, migrant, refugee and asylum seeker groups – both within existing service systems and also through specialised services where needed;
c) Inform the necessary steps to improve the health communication, health information and health literacy of CALD, migrant, refugee and asylum seeker groups

Declaration

*Please read the Melbourne Declaration below and endorse it, either as an INDIVIDUAL or on behalf of YOUR INSTITUTION if you agree with its contents.*

We, the undersigned, assembled at the Inaugural International Conference on Migration Social Disadvantage and Health held from 11th to 13th February 2015 in Melbourne Australia, hereby endorse the following statement:

1. Equip the existing health information system with culturally competent data collection strategies to create data sets that allow migration related health research and enable data-linkage across national health and immigration datasets to allow for migrant population health data analysis in order to develop robust health policy relevant to all people in Australia.
2. Build integration, recognising that integration requires change by migrants and also by host nations, such as changes to the health sector in how it cares for patients, what it considers appropriate or inappropriate in terms of health beliefs, behaviors and treatment preferences. New approaches will be needed to reach the most vulnerable migrants. And racism, fear and ignorance will need to be addressed if practitioners are to support integration.

3. Recognise that migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have a right to health and therefore appropriate access to government funded health care services. National health systems should address their special needs through the provision of migrant, refugee and asylum seeker responsive services.

4. Identify gaps in health service delivery to meet the demands of migrant health, ensure culturally competent health care; establish best practice in uniform access to basic health services to all migrants including undocumented or irregular migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and victims of human trafficking; capacity building of health professionals to ensure cultural, linguistic and religious sensitivity in health service delivery.

5. Recognise the impact of racism on health, and work to eliminating racism and race based discrimination by promoting inclusion and the equitable access of educational, employment, health and social services. Facilitate the adaptation of migrants into the host society by using integrated inter-sectoral approaches targeting these services.

6. Ensure all migrants especially those working in low-paid and occupational high risk situations, benefit from Worksafe policies, and the protection of health insurance and rehabilitation schemes for occupational disease or injury. Impart culturally relevant safety training and education and use workplaces for culturally appropriate health promotion and health education.

Melbourne, 13 February 2015

Signature

NAME, POSITION & ORGANISATION