



Addressing the health needs of a multicultural society

By Dr Ruth De Souza

Monash University School of Nursing and Midwifery has teamed up with the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health (CEH) to address the health needs of a multicultural society.

The partnership was recently announced publicly by The Hon Robin Scott, Minister for Multicultural Affairs at an event held at

North Richmond Community Health.

To strengthen this relationship, Dr Ruth De Souza (pictured), Senior Lecturer Monash University School of Nursing and Midwifery has commenced a joint appointment with the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health to lead its research team.

The partnership will work towards building an evidence-base that paves the way to changing how the health sector works with an increasingly diverse community in the years to come.

This joint appointment will allow both organisations to advance towards a shared goal of equity and quality in health for our communities, and in particular for people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

Victoria is the most culturally diverse state in Australia, with almost a quarter of Victoria's population born overseas. Victorians come from more than 230 countries, speak over 200 languages and follow more than 135 different faiths.

The partnership represents an acknowledgement of this diversity, and the need for health and social services that are equitable, culturally responsive and evidence-based.

Dr De Souza's joint appointment will help bridge the gap between research

and practice. She has a commitment to developing responsive clinical models of care that consider social determinants of health.

Both organisations aim to develop a health and social workforce that can respond effectively to the needs of a diverse community. CEH has expertise in advocacy and community-building roles to contribute to healthier social and physical environments. Monash knows how to educate and inspire practitioners to link their practical knowledge to the centuries of research and scholarship.

Through the partnership, Monash and CEH seek a system of care that is just and equitable. CEH has a distinguished track record in supporting health and social practitioners to respond sensitively and effectively to the issues faced by people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. This will be of benefit to students and staff at Monash as we prepare a rapidly changing workforce for a rapidly changing workplace.

CEH will be exposed to the university's dynamic intellectual environment and its knowledge of global currents in cultural research and health research, strengthening its expertise in cultural competence and giving the organisation a platform to lead a much needed transnational research agenda.

Funding for aged care projects

The federal government has announced \$3.8 million to extend a culturally appropriate care program for older Australians in aged care.

The funding is to support training and resources under the Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care (PICAC) programs in each state and territory. Organisations funded under PICAC provide activities including identification of barriers to access services; the provision of training to providers of residential and community based care; and development and distribution of resources that promote best practice.

In a separate announcement, the University of Queensland Centre for Research in Geriatric Medicine received \$777,296 in federal government funding for a three-year project to develop and test a new assessment system for acute hospital care. University researchers will develop and refine a nurse-administered assessment system with a range of diagnostic and risk assessment tools, Centre Director Professor Len Gray said.

While the system would be designed



for all adult inpatients, it would be most valuable for older patients, Professor Gray said. Older patients admitted to hospital had a greater risk of developing geriatric syndromes such as functional decline, falls, delirium, pressure ulcers, loss of autonomy and morale, which could lead to placement in long term residential care, he said. "Our proposal is to create an early warning and response system for all patients who are admitted to acute care, integrating case findings and good aged

care practice into the program of general care."

This would fill a gap in cognitive, functional and psychosocial screening and assessment, ensuring appropriate treatment and action at the time of admission, Professor Gray said.

The funding is for Australian testing across four hospitals in Queensland and Victoria. The project involves Mt Sinai Hospital in Canada and Christchurch Hospital in New Zealand.