

## Men's health training for rural primary health care nurses

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**Background:** The National Primary Health Care Strategy recognises the need for an improved primary health care system to respond to current gaps and inequities for different population subgroups, particularly for those living in regional/remote communities. Underpinning the Strategy is a focus on providing a flexible and well-trained workforce that works together to deliver best care to patients. Strengthening the current primary health care workforce in regional settings through appropriate and evidence-based training in men's health is imperative to reduce the health disparities experienced by men living in regional/remote communities.

**Aim:** To develop workforce capacity in men's health, a multidisciplinary approach across the health professional sector is required. To supplement our GP and Aboriginal Health Worker (AHW) men's health education program, a primary health care nurse (PHCN) men's health Train-the-Trainer (TTT) pilot program was developed to equip PHCNs with the skills and knowledge to better engage men in primary health care and community settings. The evaluation aimed to identify strategic issues to inform nationwide implementation.

**Methods:** The pilot program included an eight hour, Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association (APNA) endorsed workshop to train PHCNs as facilitators who then delivered the men's health education to their peers. The evaluation involved semi-structured interviews and/or questionnaires.

**Results:** Eighteen, mostly practice nurses, representing 11 GP Divisions/Networks from across Australia attended the TTT program. Most felt confident to facilitate a workshop for their peers and seven GP Division/Network workshops were subsequently held in two metropolitan and five regional settings (including two smaller towns). Following training, facilitators and participants from all settings reported confidence in identifying the major health issues affecting men, had a greater appreciation of men's help-seeking behaviour and an awareness of available men's health resources. Feedback from facilitators in regional settings suggested the program's adaptability for flexible delivery and the capacity to accommodate local needs and experts will suit the rural workforce.

**Conclusion:** Evaluation suggested that the PHCN men's health TTT is an effective and flexible model to raise awareness and improve the skills of PHCNs, particularly in regional settings. Online training to complement this program is currently being developed which will further increase access for rural and remote PHCNs and other health professionals. Furthermore, this training will support a multidisciplinary approach to men's health in communities where access to health services is limited.