

Australian Physiotherapy Association Congress 2010: Dr Emil Djakic's presentation

Abstract: Connecting Care: The role and function of Primary Health Care Organisations-and the central role of stakeholder engagement and partnership

Earlier this year the Council of Australian Governments agreed to the development of a National Health and Hospitals Network comprised of Local Hospital Networks and regional primary health care organisations (PHCOs).

PHCOs will be independent legal entities with responsibility for coordinating and integrating primary health care services, influencing the socio-economic determinants of health and building community capacity to best meet the health needs of local communities. The Commonwealth has announced that PHCOs will be established from the national infrastructure provided by the current General Practice Network.

With sufficient scope and capacity, PHCOs can be a key enabler of a strengthened primary health care system and can deliver better access, better coordinated care and enhanced population health outcomes for local communities. This presentation will provide an overview of the Australian General Practice Network's (AGPN's) vision of how PHCOs can function most effectively to meet the needs of their local communities.

Critical to this pursuit will be strong partnerships with local communities, primary health care professionals, health service providers and, moving forward, with community care, aged care and social care sectors. PHCOs will need to focus on improving the way professionals and providers across sectors work together to deliver well coordinated care and to identify and address service gaps and community needs.

The need for meaningful stakeholder engagement and cross-sectoral partnerships must be considered in the development of PHCO governance arrangements (including clinical governance arrangements) and establishment processes. There are practical barriers that will need to be overcome at regional levels to support meaningful engagement and sound partnerships, including with primary health care professionals across disciplines.