

International Federation of Community Health Centres – an Australian Perspective

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Canadian Alliance of Community Health Centre Associations, CACHCA, European Forum for Primary Care, EFPC, the United States National Association of Community Health Centers, NACHC and Community Health Australia, CHA, have taken the initiative in 2011 signing an MOU to form the International Federation of Community Health Centres (IFCHC) based on a shared understanding of the community health model.

The core characteristics of the Community Health Centers are :

- Delivery of an integrated, comprehensive, person- and people centered primary health care, with an inter-professional team that addresses aspects of both health and welfare.
- Clinical primary care services that address aspects of promotion and prevention, curative care, rehabilitation, palliative care, using a holistic frame of reference and is orientated towards the needs of individuals and populations.
- The primary care team that integrates in their patients daily activities, the broader causes of illness, and looks at the social determinants of health that are addressed through inter-sectoral cooperation.
- Development of a community oriented primary care strategy, blending skills for individual health care with approaches of public health.
- The primary care team that has a commitment to equity and social inclusion and puts emphasis on access to health care (with special attention to the most vulnerable) and to respect of fundamental human rights.
- A strong emphasis on community engagement and civic participation in health and health care, which may include forms of participation of clients/patients in governments of health care organization.
- Contribution to universal coverage and are universal accessibility for individuals and families, irrespective of race, religion, social status
- Engagement in continuing processes of quality improvement, starting from the needs of individuals and patients that they are serving.
- Responsibility for a defined population, that can be geographically determined or defined e.g. through a patient-list.

As a result of these shared values and this holistic approach to health, wellness and health care, CACHCA, EFPC and NACHC have initiated several lines of communication and knowledge-sharing to date. There is an opportunity for Australia to be part of and to take a leading role in development of this global initiative and foster the exchange of local experience and develop best practice.

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