



The Diagnosis Report

di·ag·no·sis (n)

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1. the identifying of an illness or disorder in a patient through an interview, physical examination, and medical tests and other procedures

Aboriginal pathology training program aims to 'close the gap'

A community based training program developed in collaboration with DMC for Aboriginal community health workers to deliver patient pathology testing may dramatically advance Aboriginal health outcomes in NSW and other states and territories.

The Health & Aboriginal Pathology Program (HAPP) has been jointly developed with Mission Australia, one of Australia's leading providers to Job Search and Apprenticeship Australia.

The HAPP program will contribute to:

A self sustained, effective, immediate, standardized and most importantly culturally sensitive approach towards clinically appropriate Pathological Investigations of Aboriginal Patients that currently attend existing Aboriginal Medical Services throughout Australia or in the Torres Strait Islands

The project is built on a growing collaboration that aims to break down old taboos and barriers that has traditionally separated Aboriginal communities from the best delivery of health outcomes.

Mission Australia's National Aboriginal Advisor Mr Steve Cochrane sees great benefits coming from opportunities for Diagnostic Medical Co-operative (DMC) to partner with the Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS) & relevant government authorities related with Health through their Aboriginal 'Close the Gap' campaigns.

Spokesman for DMC, Con Kostakis (CEO) said no previous effort by any organisation government or otherwise had been made to allocate the required resources with the necessary 'cultural sensitivity and respect' towards this current significant deficiency. The DMC has travelled and spoken with a significant cross section of Aboriginal communities and with their respective Aboriginal Medical Services and appreciate and have tailored the HAPP program based on such understanding and appreciation.

The study process concluded that Aboriginal people have a right to self sustainability based on their different perspective on matters such as going to hospital or to their medical practitioner or even something as simple as having their blood taken.

It's about training and placing Aboriginal Blood Collectors who have the natural appreciation and cultural background

to break down these barriers because they are a part of these communities.

It identified that Aboriginal communities, across all areas, have issues dealing with Health Professionals & Pathology Collectors from non-Aboriginal backgrounds and that this creates significant issues with the monitoring and resulting treatment of health conditions in those communities.

Underlying concept development is that the training and employment of Aboriginal Pathology collectors will:

- 1 Deliver more cultural sensitivity in the provision of pathology services and as a result generate higher rates of compliance from local communities
- 2 Build a base understanding in communities for the need and benefits to monitor health conditions.
- 3 Deliver access to services for remote communities
- 4 Provide employment opportunities in these same communities.

The outcome will be the improvement in the collection of patient information to assist treating practitioners to be able to deliver better patient care outcomes; and improvement in communities by the development of further employment opportunities especially in the Pathology Collection, Health and Laboratory Services.



Pictured during a visit to Aboriginal Health Centres in NSW are Steve Cochrane, National Indigenous Advisor Mission Australia (left) and Peter Crawford, DMC Pathology Service Manager.

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DMC CEO Con Kostakis and DMC Pathology Services Manager Peter Crawford and Mr Steve Cochrane in the last two months have visited and discussed the project with numerous Aboriginal Medical Services and met with numerous representatives of government and national policy control bodies.

Identified in initial discussions with regional Aboriginal Medical Services was the expansion on this concept in that delivery of networks within communities allowed for the expansion of services to significantly upgrade and manage the collection and delivery of patient information to the treating practitioners:

Point of care testing that would make available key patient results to improve consultation and screen for potential issues.

Proactive management of chronic diseases through regular pathology, creating work plans for aboriginal staff for them to implement within communities. i.e. being proactive with patients who have chronic diseases and working in communities to get appropriate compliance of patient.

Provide culturally supportive information and diagnostic reports for patients to understand their health conditions, again to enhance communities understanding and awareness of the importance of treatment.

Community Objectives

- Improve patient care outcomes for the Aboriginal Communities
- Increase employment opportunities for Aboriginals working within their own communities

National Benefit Objectives

- Enhance access to critical patient care information for treating practitioners
- Provide a network of resources that assist in upgrading services to remote and underprivileged communities

DMC Corporate Objectives

- Create a sustainable business to support the network of services created.
- Develop long-term business position that allows for the development and profitable expansion of services within the networks created
- Integrate logistics and resources and technologies developed for Indigenous communities with expansion of these services for the wider public especially regional and remote areas

Stop Press

NATA Accreditation for Sydney Laboratory

The DMC Sydney Laboratory has received a further 2 years accreditation. This outcome is a credit to the dedication of Angela Manoulios DMC Sydney Laboratory Quality Manager and Supervising Quality Pathologist Sydney Laboratory, Dr Robert Warlow.

New Staff Appointment

DMC has employed a new Business Development Manager, Hani Yassa, to build membership and progress opportunities in the Sydney market. Hani has extensive experience in liaising with doctors across Sydney based on strong relationships built on excellent customer service.

Legal advice confirms DMC proper status

On 30 November 2009 DMC received formal written advice from one of Australia's leading Senior Counsel Barristers in the area of the Health Insurance Act 1973, Mr Francois Kunc SC, who was retained by the DMC to provide detailed advice concerning the legality of the cooperative and its business model and other matters.

A statement from the Board of DMC said:

"The DMC wishes to confirm that the activities and the business model of the DMC complies in all respects with the Health Insurance Act 1973 and particularly in relation to the provision of pathology related collection services which are carried out on behalf of its Members."

"We commend this high level legal advice to members. It re-affirms the proper status of the co-operative and we believe it should provide certainty for our members and prospective members."

The DMC sought this formal legal advice from Mr Kunc to satisfy several doctors who had received mischievous comments or allegations about DMC from competitive representatives of the pathology industry.

CEO Mr Con Kostakis said: "This advice will provide comfort and certainty to the existing Members of the DMC as well as to doctors who have been waiting to commence their Membership.

"This latest legal advice should satisfy any member or prospective member that the DMC has fully confirmed its legal position in the pathology marketplace through the advice of its senior legal advisors and in particular with reference to the latest advice from Mr Kunc SC.

"The DMC is built on a solid foundation based on law, ethical behaviour and patient service.

"The solidarity of the DMC Membership is a testament to the individual integrity of each of the doctors that have joined and supported the ethos of regaining control and ownership of diagnostic services and providing vital and affordable services to their patients.

"Throughout the course of 2009 the DMC has maintained an open and transparent dialogue and relationship with Medicare Australia conducting meetings and exchanging ongoing updated information regarding the operation and services provided to members of the DMC as well as the actions and behaviour of its antagonistic competitors," said Mr Kostakis.

Footnote: The 'Kunc Advice' took into consideration the Health Insurance Act 1973 (the HIA) as well as the recent 'guide' to the HIA from the Department of Health and Ageing titled **Changes to Laws relating to Pathology and Diagnostic Imaging** which came into effect in March 2008.

Members have received a detailed analysis of the 'Kunc Advice' by letter or email, but if any reader of 'Diagnosis' wishes a more detailed explanation they may contact Mr Kostakis by email for any inquiry or to make an arrangement to meet in person.

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