



Jillian Skinner MP

Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

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PATIENT SAFETY AT HEART OF MULTICULTURAL HEALTH WEEK

Enhancing communication about medication safety in languages other than English is at the very heart of Multicultural Health Week, Minister for Health Jillian Skinner and Minister for Citizenship and Communities Victor Dominello said today.

Mrs Skinner said this year's Multicultural Health Week, which kicks off today, focuses on the benefits of better communication to improve awareness of medication side-effects for multicultural patients.

The 2013 Multicultural Health Week theme is *working together for safe, quality care*.

"Medication safety is incredibly important for both patients and their family members and I'm pleased to see this issue under the spotlight for the benefit and well-being of multicultural communities across the state," Mrs Skinner said.

"Evidence suggests that multicultural patients, especially those with limited English, are at a significantly higher risk of harm than patients who speak English well. For multicultural patients, 49 per cent of incidents result in some physical harm, which is 20 per cent higher than English-speaking patients.

"It is estimated there are 190,000 medication-related hospital admissions every year in Australia.

"Multicultural communities will have access to health information and services in their language on safer use of medicines.

"Multicultural Health Week is a wonderful opportunity for CALD communities to learn more about the key role they have in determining their own health care and safety."

Mr Dominello said 25 per cent of NSW residents are born overseas and 40 per cent have at least one parent born outside Australia.

"Language and culture impact on patient safety and this is particularly important when encouraging health professionals to use key techniques in dealing with multicultural patients," Mr Dominello said.

"By using interpreters, doctors and health workers can reduce the risk of harm, improve patient outcomes and better support patients from multicultural backgrounds and other patients with low health literacy.

“Posters and flyers have been produced for health care workers in major hospitals promoting multicultural health week and tips for health care professionals to improve medication safety for patients,” Mr Dominello said.

Print advertisements in Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Italian and Vietnamese will appear in major ethnic papers about how patients have a role in their own health care and safety. These print advertisements will also carry tips on medication safety.

Radio advertisements will be broadcast in Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Greek, Italian and Vietnamese.

A number of activities have been organised across the state to raise awareness about the effect of miscommunication between health care professionals and patients and the impact of medication safety incidents including discussions in Arabic, Cantonese, Greek, Korean, Italian, Mandarin and Vietnamese as well as other languages.

Since 2009, the NSW Multicultural Health Communication Service (MHCS) has been funded by NSW Government to coordinate Multicultural Health Week as a state-wide activity.

This year, the Multicultural Health Communication Service has partnered with the Clinical Excellence Commission (CEC) and NPS MedicineWise in consultation with multicultural health services in Local Health Districts across NSW.

For more information on Multicultural Health Week visit www.multiculturalhealthweek.com.

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