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Latest Remote Primary Health Care Manuals launched in NT

A suite of best-practice manuals for primary healthcare workers in central, northern and remote Australia reviewed by Flinders University experts in collaboration with a volunteer editorial committee and more than 300 volunteer reviewers has been launched.

The newest edition of the Remote Primary Health Care Manuals (RPHCM) comprises five books which are designed to support high quality clinical practice. They are widely used across the health care system, including in clinical care, education and orientation in the Northern Territory, remote South Australia, Ngaanyatjarra and Kimberley regions in Western Australia and beyond.

The RPHCM are:

- CARPA Standard Treatment Manual (STM)
- Minymaku Kutju Tjukurpa — Women's Business Manual (WBM)
- Clinical Procedures Manual for remote and rural practice (CPM)
- Medicines Book for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners and Health Workers (MED)
- Reference Book for the Remote Primary Health Care Manuals (REF).

The suite of books has been edited by the Flinders University Project Team through funding from the Australian Government Department of Health. The review process is overseen, and final protocols endorsed, by a volunteer editorial committee comprising senior and experienced remote area clinicians including doctors, nurses and pharmacists. The 320 volunteer reviewers, including nurses, doctors, Aboriginal Health Practitioners and allied health workers, were engaged to ensure that the protocols reflect current, best-practice and are clinically appropriate for remote and Indigenous primary health care settings.

Project Director Dr Anthea Brand says the books are a vital resource for primary health care staff working in remote parts of Australia where support and internet services are often scarce.

"The manuals have been developed by practitioners for practitioners and follow best clinical practice with consideration of the remote primary health care context," says Dr Brand.

"The protocols in the manuals are reviewed through primary and secondary review processes to ensure they follow the latest best-practice evidence, are practical for use in a remote clinic, and suitable for users from different health professions. All recommended medicines are checked by a pharmacy working group to ensure the medicines and doses are correct and the final protocols are reviewed and endorsed by the expert editorial committee members."

A governance committee oversees the manuals project and is made up of representatives of the organisations that have ownership of the manuals through a joint venture agreement. The committee meets regularly to oversee project activities and to ensure all groups are aware of and supportive of RPHCM developments as well as coordinating information sharing

The STM and WBM were first published in the 1990s and are formally endorsed by government and community-controlled health service providers and health care organisations throughout the NT.

The medicines recommended in the CARPA STM and the WBM can be dispensed and administered by nurses, midwives and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners under the NT Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act.

The updating of this legislation is usually announced via the Northern Territory Government Gazette soon after the publication of the latest edition of manuals.

Dr Brand says users of the manuals value the books with feedback and evaluations, showing that adherence to the guidelines was high.

The books will be distributed to health clinics across rural and remote Australia and electronic versions of the manuals will also be available at: remotephcmanuals.com.au

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