General practice complex care for vulnerable populations

North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN) and Medical Advocacy Together for Community Health [(MATCH)](https://www.matchealth.net/) are offering a free series of education sessions for GPs and registrars who work with complex patients within marginalised communities in the LGAs of Brimbank, Wyndham, Hume or Melton.

The series is designed to increase skills and confidence of GPs working in communities containing high numbers of people with complex health needs and few resources.

Training will run over six months, with six full-day sessions held at NWMPHN’s Docklands offices. To be eligible, participants must be able to attend every session.

The series is accredited for 36 RACGP CPD hours.

Each session is designed to increase skills and collegial support for health issues emerging within marginalised communities. Facilitators will be GP experts in each field. For full details see page 4.

* **Session 1:** Tuesday, 25 February2025 –Alcohol and other drugs in complex patients, with Dr Dean Membrey and Dr Sarah Garry
* **Session 2:** Tuesday, 25 March 2025 – Introduction to narrative medicine, with Dr Mariam Tokhi
* **Session 3:** Tuesday, 15 April 2025 – Complex mental health in the primary care setting, with Dr Erin Gordon and Dr Joanne Gardiner
* **Session 4:** Thursday, 22 May2025 – Family violence, with Professor Kelsey Hegarty
* **Session 5:** Tuesday, 17 June 2025 – Refugee health masterclass, with Dr Kate Walker and Dr Joanne Gardiner
* **Session 6:** Tuesday, 29 July 2025 – Working with people who have housing insecurity and complex mental health issues, with Dr Ed Poliness.

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| The series will enable participants to: * Improve effective management of vulnerable populations
* Enhance cultural competence in daily practice
* Improve provider and patient communication
* Increase confidence using interventions for vulnerable populations
* Increase knowledge of referral pathways for vulnerable populations.
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Eligibility criteria

**To be eligible for the training, participants must be:**

* a general practitioner or registrar
* working at a general practice located in Brimbank, Wyndham, Hume or Melton – LGAs identified in NWMPHN’s current [Health Needs Assessment](https://nwmphn.org.au/about/our-community/health-needs-assessment/) as having the highest rates of community need.

Participation requirements

**Participants will be required to:**

* attend on site **all six** full-day workshop sessions
* complete all evaluation activities.

RACGP CPD hours

Completing the full six education sessions will provide GPs and registrars with 36 RACGP CPD hours, comprising of 18 Educational Activities and 18 Reviewing Performance.

For NWMPHN to submit RACGP hours on your behalf, all of the above requirements need to be met.

## How to Apply

### Application submission

Applicants must complete and return the [[form](https://forms.office.com/r/ZbXVvEKnhj)](https://forms.office.com/r/ZbXVvEKnhj) by 5pm on Tuesday, 18 February 2025.

Please direct all queries to education@nwmphn.org.au.

NWMPHN is not obliged to accept any proposal received after the submission deadline. Where an applicant provides evidence of exceptional circumstances affecting on time submission, NWMPHN may decide to accept an application received after the submission deadline but is not obliged to do so.

### Assessment process

All compliant applications received by NWMPHN will be evaluated in accordance with the assessment criteria in the application form.

NWMPHN may contact the applicant if it considers that an application contains an ambiguity, unintentional error or minor omission which requires clarification. It will not do so where this would unfairly disadvantage other applicants.

All applicants will be notified. Unsuccessful applicants may request feedback in writing or verbally by contacting education@nwmphn.org.au.

## Education session details

Education sessions run once a month, for six months. This allows time for participants to reflect on and implement what they learn.

Each session will be led by subject matter experts, allowing participants to ask questions and gain practical insights that they can apply to their practice, fostering continuous professional development and improvements in patient care.

**Session 1: Alcohol and other drugs in complex patients**

**Tuesday, 25 February 2025**

Join with Dr Dean Membrey and Dr Sarah Garry from Innerspace in Collingwood, who specialise in treating substance use challenges. The session will cover the basics of substance use history-taking and examination, covering topics such as the use of non-stigmatising language and the principles of a harm reduction approach.

*Learning outcomes*

Participants will be able to:

1. *Identify and record a detailed substance use history, including screening for physical and mental health comorbidities.*
2. *Demonstrate understanding of how to use non-stigmatising language when discussing addiction medicine topics.*
3. *Assess for the appropriateness of, and how to provide support for, ambulatory withdrawals.*
4. *Demonstrate ability to provide alcohol pharmacotherapies to support non-abstinence treatment goals.*
5. *Demonstrate ability to provide psychoeducation to patients about amphetamine dependence and withdrawal.*
6. *Assess and manage benzodiazepine dependency.*
7. *Assess for opioid use disorder and discuss treatment options*

**Session 2: Introduction to narrative medicine**

**Tuesday, 25 March 2025**

Join Dr Mariam Tokhi to explore the impact of narrative medicine on clinical practice and personal creativity. This interactive workshop explores this new field, examining its intersection between art, literature, storytelling and clinical practice.

*Learning outcomes*

Participants will be able to:

1. *Gain a foundational understanding of narrative medicine, including its principles and how it integrates art, literature, storytelling, and clinical practice.*
2. *Enhance creativity for self-expression, reflection and well-being, essential skills in personal and professional development.*
3. *Explore the therapeutic potential of storytelling and listening to improve patient care and support health care providers’ emotional and psychological wellbeing.*
4. *Apply narrative approaches in general practice, improving patient communication and care outcomes.*

**Session 3: Complex mental health in the primary care setting**

**Tuesday, 15 April 2025**

This session, facilitated by Dr Erin Gordon (headspace and cohealth) and Dr Joanne Gardiner (Head to Health and cohealth) will cover the most common mental health presentations in the primary care setting, particularly in those clients with increased barriers to care, such as adolescents, refugees and asylum-seekers and clients affected by homelessness and substance use.

*Learning outcomes:*

Participants will be able to:

1. *Demonstrate how to perform a risk assessment for a complex client and refer accordingly.*
2. *Formulate diagnoses and a multidisciplinary management plan for a range of clients.*
3. *Demonstrate how to use the Mental Health Act and how to preserve the therapeutic relationship.*

**Session 4: Family violence**

**Thursday, 22 May 2025**

In this session, Professor Kelsey Hegarty, a GP and academic with roles at Melbourne University and the Royal Women’s Hospital, and Dr Eleanor Bulford outline responses to domestic and family violence. It will focus on the evidence base for preventing violence against women, together with the identification of domestic and family violence in primary care settings and early support for men, women, and children exposed to abuse.

*Learning outcomes:*

Participants will be able to:

1. *Understand the complexities of recognising and responding to survivors of domestic and family violence.*
2. *Describe approaches to dealing with perpetrators of domestic and family violence including when you are seeing both partners.*
3. *Demonstrate how to safely respond to children experiencing domestic violence.*

**Session 5: Refugee health masterclass**

**Tuesday, 17 June 2025**

Dr Kate Walker and Dr Joanne Gardiner, co-authors of the [*Australian Refugee Health Practice Guide*](https://refugeehealthguide.org.au/), explore the complexities of working with this population.

*Learning outcomes:*

Participants will be able to:

1. *Understand the current refugee situation globally and nationally, including current global refugee numbers, visas and entitlements in Australia, and new arrival stats in Australia.*
2. *Demonstrate and understand how to deliver culturally safe and trauma-informed care to people from refugee backgrounds.*
3. *Demonstrate how to tailor a consultation to specific needs, including implementing mental health and management plans.*
4. *Increase confidence in effectively working with interpreters.*
5. *Better assist patients to navigate the health system.*
6. *Understand how to undertake risk-based screening and health assessments for people from refugee backgrounds.*

**Session 6: Working with people who have housing insecurity and complex mental health issues**

**Tuesday, 29 July 2025**

This session will be delivered by Dr Ed Poliness from The Living Room, a service for people experiencing homelessness in inner city Melbourne.

*Learning outcomes*

Participants will be able to:

1. *Understand the barriers to effective health care caused by homelessness.*
2. *Interpret a range of management strategies for engaging and working with those experiencing homelessness.*
3. *Identify and interpret the personal, social and cultural factors that may shape problematic health interactions for those experiencing homelessness.*



We acknowledge the peoples of the Kulin nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our work in the community takes place. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.