



Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Health Practice
Chinese Medicine
Chiropractic
Dental
Medical
Medical Radiation Practice
Nursing and Midwifery
Occupational Therapy
Optometry
Osteopathy
Pharmacy
Physiotherapy
Podiatry
Psychology

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

Concept paper

23 January 2019

Developing a regional network of health workforce regulators

Background

Health workforce is a critical input for a functioning health system, and regulation of the health workforce plays an important part in maintaining safe standards of practice. However, considerable variability exists in the regulatory arrangements for health workers, as a result of which patients and communities are not offered the same level of protection and standard of care. Previous meetings¹ of health workforce regulators have identified several challenges across countries in the Region, including reduced regulatory capacities within individual countries, inadequate legislative provisions to support effective regulation, poor coordination between health and education sectors, lack of quality assurance mechanisms for the practice of the workforce, inadequate opportunities for professional development within the system, limited vigilance on ethical standards of practice, and low level of community engagement.

The Western Pacific Region (WPR) of the WHO has identified strengthening of regulatory systems for health workers as a priority action domain to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) goals.² The *Regional Action Agenda on Regulatory Strengthening, Convergence and Cooperation for Medicines and Health Workforce*³ was adopted at the 68th Regional Committee Meeting. It guides Member States on how to strengthen regulatory systems to improve quality and safety in the performance of the health system, thereby protecting public health and advancing UHC.

To assist work to strengthen health workforce regulation, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), in partnership with National Boards for the health professions in Australia, has been designated as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Workforce Regulation. An important component of this collaboration is to establish a cross-professional collaborative network of health workforce regulators in the region. It is envisaged this collaborative network will lead to increased communication, information exchange and work to assist standardization of regulatory standards and practice in the WPR.

This collaborative is proposed to be known as the *Western Pacific Regional Network of Health Workforce Regulators* (abbreviated to the Network).

Scope

For the purposes of the activities of the Network, health workforce regulation covers the following dimensions:

- The licencing and registration of health workers to support access to health care, public protection and maintaining the standards of practice of health workers.
- Systems and processes that manage the conduct and practice of health workers, including the management of complaints about the safe practice of health workers.
- Accreditation of educational programs that lead to licencing or registration of health workers.
- Standards, policies, codes or guidelines that underpin the above dimensions.
- Stakeholder engagement, including the identification and utilisation of skills of other Collaboration Centres.

Objectives

¹ Policy roundtable on strengthening health workforce regulation: Meeting report, Melbourne, Australia, 19-20 September 2016 . World Health Organisation Regional Office for the Western Pacific

² Report of the Regional Director, The work of the WHO in the Western Pacific Region, 2016-2017

³ Western Pacific Regional Action Agenda on Regulatory Strengthening, Convergence and Cooperation for Medicines and the Health Workforce

The Network will be a trans-government regional collaborative of health workforce regulators to:

- assess trends, policies and critical issues in health workforce regulation in the WPR;
- promote good regulatory practices in health workforce regulation between Member States;
- seek agreement on the objectives and principles for regulation of the health workforce in the WPR, with the primary purpose of improving practice quality;
- advocate for coordinated action to strengthen health workforce regulation across the region;
- strengthen regulatory capabilities of Member States;
- improve practice quality in support of patient safety;
- promote information exchange and collaboration, and
- monitor progress and indicators of achieving objectives and the network

Outputs

The Network is expected to produce the following outputs of its work.

- Sharing of knowledge and information regarding systems and practice in regulation.
- Cross-country learning on regulatory implementation.
- Identify and share practices on risk-based or performance-based regulation.
- Produce discussion and policy papers on identified regulatory issues.
- Opportunities for collaboration, learning and capacity building outside of meetings of the Network.

Activities

The principal activity of the Network will be quarterly meetings held by videoconference or online platforms. The early work of the Network will be to establish effective working relationships and develop a prioritised list of topics of regulatory issues to be addressed by the Network and other stakeholders where required. As the Network develops and matures, it is expected that further activities may occur to support the work of the WPR in strengthening regulatory systems, such as project work on identified priorities, initiatives to further the sharing of knowledge (e.g. work experience placements, formal visitations to Member States), education and training of regulators and practitioners.

Governance

The establishment of the Network is part of the established workplan for the WHO Collaboration Centre for Health Workforce Regulation. As such, the work of the Network is approved by the WPR office of the WHO. Oversight of the work will be provided by AHPRA, including the secretariat functions of the Network. The work of the Network will be reviewed annually by the WPR office and AHPRA as part of the established workplan for the Collaboration Centre (CC) for Health Workforce Regulation.

Membership of the Network will be open to

- People from Member States with recognised responsibilities for health workforce regulation.
- Representatives of other WHO CC's with interest in the health workforce regulation.

The Draft Terms of Reference for the Network is provided in the Appendix.

Appendix - Draft Terms of Reference

Western Pacific Regional Network of Health Workforce Regulators

Purpose

The purpose of the Western Pacific Regional Network of Health Workforce Regulators (the Network) is to promote good practice regulation and cross-country learning on health workforce regulation in the Western Pacific Region of the World Health Organisation.

Objectives

1. Assess trends, policies and critical issues in health workforce regulation in the WPR;
2. Promote good regulatory practices in health workforce regulation between Member States;
3. Seek agreement on the objectives and principles for regulation of the health workforce in the WPR, with the primary purpose of improving practice quality;
4. Advocate for coordinated action to strengthen health workforce regulation across the region; and
5. Strengthen regulatory capabilities of Member States.
6. Monitoring progress and indicators of achieving objectives of the Network.

Terms of reference

1. The Network provides a forum to share information, advise, and work towards the achievement consensus on matters within the Western Pacific Region (WPR) of the WHO on health workforce regulation, including (but not limited to):
 - the licensing / registration of health workers⁴,
 - regulatory standards of practice for health workers⁴,
 - the exchange of health workforce information between Member States,
 - cross-country learning on implementation of regulatory policies or approaches,
 - strengthen country level capacity to use database of registrants for purposes of supporting risk-based or performance-based regulation, identifying practice quality improvement opportunities, or other policy interventions needed, and workforce analysis and planning,
 - policy and regulatory issues relevant to promoting access to safe and quality health care, ensuring appropriate standards of education of health workers and managing complaints regarding the conduct and practice of health workers,
 - advice on broader health system and regional developments (for example, the impact of trade agreements on health workforce regulation),
 - requests for advice on country specific regulatory policies or approaches,
 - other issues that impact, or potentially impact, on health workforce regulation.
2. The Network may also initiate projects or other work in support of achieving the objectives of the Network or best practice health workforce regulation. The Network may establish committees or working groups to achieve this.

Governance

The Network is part of the work of WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Workforce Regulation, led by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). AHPRA is responsible for leadership and oversight of the Network. The WPR office of the WHO is responsible for the approval of the Terms of Reference and work of the Network.

⁴ Includes traditional and complementary medicine practitioners

Upon establishment of the Network, a coordination group representing members may also be established to assist in the coordination of the Network (e.g. to assist in setting agendas, organising meeting speakers, prepare communications etc).

Membership

Membership of the Network is open to:

- Representatives of Member States with recognised responsibilities for policy making and regulation of the health workforce,
- Educators, academics and others with recognised expertise in health workforce regulation from Member States,
- Representatives of the WHO.

Other people may be invited to participate in the work of the Network as agreed by the Chair of the Network. There is no maximum number of members from any Member States. Members may elect to send proxies to participate in meetings.

Chair

The Chair of the Network will be the Chief Executive Officer of AHPRA.

Secretariat

AHPRA will undertake secretariat duties, including the use of the videoconference / online platform for the conduct of meetings.

Procedural issues

- An initial call for nominations to participate in the Network will be sent by the WPR office of the WHO. AHPRA may assist in seeking nominations.
- Approximately 4 meetings of the Network will be set each year. The primary method of meeting will be by videoconference and/or online meeting platforms.
- An agenda for each meeting will be prepared by the AHPRA secretariat, approved by the Chair and distributed at least seven days in advance of the meeting. Members will be invited to submit agenda items for consideration.
- A record of meeting discussions will be taken and distributed to members within 21 days of the meeting.
- The Network may agree to develop and publish a Communique of the discussions from a meeting.
- Unless specified, discussions within Network meetings will not be considered confidential to the Network.
- The Network may agree to form committees or other working groups to achieve the objectives of the Network.

Review

AHPRA and the WPR office of the WHO will review the Network Terms of Reference once a year. Network members will also monitor progress of the Network and may be asked to provide feedback on the Terms of Reference.