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Media release 14 May 2013

Exercise physiologist a finalist in national primary health awards

An accredited exercise physiologist and dietician, who helps people achieve better health through her work and various volunteer positions, has been named a finalist in the 2013 HESTA Primary Health Care Awards.

Peggy Huang — of the South Western Sydney Medicare Local (SWSML) — has been recognised as one of four finalists in the Young Leader category, for her work with multiple exercise, nutrition and healthy lifestyle programs.

The awards recognise the dedication and professionalism of those working in primary health care, including physiotherapists, dentists, pharmacists, therapists, GPs, rehabilitation professionals, health educators and medical practice managers.

Ms Huang adapted the National Healthy Eating Activity and Lifestyle (HEAL™) program and resources to meet the needs of the multicultural community in South Western Sydney. Many of the patients who completed the programs have achieved positive results, such as a reduction in blood pressure, waist circumference and requirement for medication.

She also conducted, and recently completed evaluating, an exercise and education program for Vietnamese patients with type 2 diabetes. Over time, participants achieved a 25 per cent increase in arm strength, a 66 per cent increase in vegetable intake and more than doubled their physical activity.

In 2012-13, Ms Huang facilitated the Falls Prevention Program at various residential aged care facilities across South Western Sydney. As a result of the program, the participants significantly improved their confidence, strength and walking capacity, and decreased their risk of falls. In addition to the geriatric population, she has also worked across many demographics and groups with special needs including youth, cardiac rehab and people with complex clinical conditions.

Ms Huang is currently working as a Practice Support Officer with SWSML where she supports general practices to achieve better health for their patients.

She also volunteers on the NSW Board of Exercise and Sport Science Australia — the professional organisation for tertiary trained exercise and sport science practitioners. Ms Huang engages in many community projects, including fundraising for cancer research and groups with special needs. She has also volunteered at the Australian Diabetes Council's Lions Kids Camps for children with type 1 diabetes.

Using her skills and experience as a former Sports Medicine Australia Sports Trainer and First Aider, Ms Huang now volunteers to provide first aid and event support at various not-for-profit community events and races, including the Sri Chinmoy Race Series.

The judges commended Ms Huang for selfless attitude in improving the community's health and described her as a leader of high quality.

Ms Huang and the other finalists will be flown to Melbourne for an awards dinner on 6 June 2013, when the winners will be revealed.

A \$30,000 prize pool will be shared among the winners, courtesy of long-term HESTA awards sponsor, ME Bank. The Young Leader and the Individual Distinction Award winners will each receive a \$5,000 ME Bank *EveryDay* Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant. The Team Excellence Award winner will receive a \$10,000 development grant to put towards the implementation of their program or initiative.

HESTA is the leading super fund for health and community services, with more than 750,000 members and \$22 billion in assets. More people in health and community services choose HESTA for their super.

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