

Mildura GP helping refugees – a finalist in national primary health care awards

Today, HESTA announced Dr Mehdi Sanati pour as an Individual Distinction finalist in the 2015 HESTA Primary Health Care Awards, for his work providing health services to disadvantaged members of his community.

Dr Sanati pour runs a weekly refugee health clinic providing newly arrived refugees free access to health services incorporating a comprehensive health assessment with mental health check, and connects them to relevant services.

“I work closely with the community and involve doctors with specific language skills to communicate with refugees, reducing the need for interpreter services,” said Dr Sanati pour.

“The refugee health nurses at Sunraysia Community Health Services coordinate follow up appointments and further assessment needs, providing vital support to vulnerable people.

“There are a number of gaps in health services for refugees, such as their eligibility for subsidised immunisations and ensuring that they have appropriate coverage protecting them against diseases.

“For example, the Hepatitis B immunisation is not included in the schedule in Victoria. A recently awarded \$20,000 grant from a pharmaceutical company has enabled me to start a Refugee Hepatitis B Immunisation program.

“There’s also a shortage of specialised services in rural and regional area, which is more pronounced in culturally and linguistically diverse groups. Language barriers and cultural isolation can negatively affect social participation preventing integration of newly arrived migrants and refugees into the general community.

The refugee health clinic also provides free access to mental health nurses, psychologists and other allied health providers, working closely with community groups, such as the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council, which help facilitate arrival and settlement of refugees (mainly from Afghanistan and Sri Lanka) in the Mildura region.

The HESTA Primary Health Care Awards recognise the dedication and professionalism of those working at the frontline of health care, including physiotherapists, dentists, pharmacists, therapists, GPs, rehabilitation professionals, health educators and medical practice managers.

Winners will be announced at the HESTA Primary Health Care Awards dinner on Tuesday, 10 November.

The Individual Distinction and Young Leader Award winners will each receive a \$5,000 **ME** EveryDay transaction account and \$5,000 towards further education. The Team Excellence Award winner will receive a \$10,000 development grant.

For more information visit hestaawards.com.au

Follow the Twitter conversation [@HESTAPHCawards](https://twitter.com/HESTAPHCawards)

*The 2015 HESTA Primary Health Care Awards is a HESTA initiative, proudly sponsored by the bank owned by industry super funds, **ME**.*

Media contact

Atika Fraval, Media Manager – 03 8660 1684 or 0488 250 049