



anf position
statement

australian nursing federation

primary health care

The Australian Nursing Federation supports the definition of primary health care in the Declaration at Alma Ata:

Primary health care is essential health care based on practical scientifically sound and socially acceptable methods and technology made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community through their full participation and at a cost that the community and country can afford to maintain at every stage of their development in the spirit of self-reliance and self determination. It forms an integral part of both the country's health system of which it is the central function and main focus and of the overall social and economic development of the community. It is the first level of contact of individuals, the family, and community, with the national health system bringing health care as close as possible to where people live and work and constitutes the first element of a continuing health care process.¹

Primary health care acknowledges a social view of health and promotes the concept of self reliance to individuals and communities in exercising control over conditions which determine their health.

Primary health care is both an approach to dealing with health issues and a level of service provision. As an approach primary health care deals with the main health problems and issues experienced by the community. It may include care and treatment services, rehabilitation and support for individuals or families, health promotion and illness prevention and community development.

Primary health care aims to:

- build self reliance at a personal and community level;
- include consumers in the delivery and planning of health services;
- adopt a co-operative approach by a range of health and related agencies (eg. housing, transport, welfare and local government agencies);
- integrate health services to facilitate continuity of care and efficiency of resource consumption;
- pay special attention to vulnerable and high risk groups; and
- use technology appropriately.

It is the position of the Australian Nursing Federation that:

1. Health care organisations must provide the resources needed to enable nurses, and other health care providers, to exercise their full potential to implement primary health care activities and not to limit roles to the provision of emergency and illness care.
2. Nurses are encouraged to assume responsibility for implementing primary health care by identifying strategies and actions required to exercise their full potential.
3. Nurses are encouraged to develop both an understanding of the philosophy of primary health care and a commitment to its values and goals.

endorsed september 1994

reviewed and re-endorsed november 1996

reviewed and re-endorsed february 2006

reviewed and re-endorsed may 2009

Reference

1. The Declaration of Alma-Ata can be found on the following website,
http://www.euro.who.int/AboutWHO/Policy/20010827_1