Diabetes Clearing House

What’s in a name?
The Diabetes Clearing House seeks, collects and processes information, advice and expertise relevant to achieving the goals of both the Strategic Plan for Diabetes in South Australia and the National Diabetes Strategy. The concept of a clearing house was proposed to promote the notion of a two-way exchange of information. It also applies to the day-to-day task of clearing information for use and promoting the best available evidence so that it can be easily accessed and utilised by health professionals and policy makers.

Why is a diabetes clearing house necessary?
The Diabetes Clearing House was established in 1998, after diabetes was recognised as a health priority area, to provide high quality and timely information about diabetes and its impact on public health. At the time, there was no appropriately skilled organisation specifically committed to providing planning information for diabetes. The proposal for a clearing house was consistent with the spirit and recommendations of the Saint Vincent Declaration that identified future directions for diabetes and the need to:

"Reinforce existing centres of excellence in diabetes care, education and research. Create new centres where the need and potential exist."

Diabetes is recognised as a health priority area because of:

- its prevalence in the community;
- its impact on the health and quality of life of individuals and their families;
- the direct and indirect costs to the health system and individuals;
- and the potential for effective intervention.

The Diabetes Clearing House provides timely, high quality data to inform the development of policy, strategies, intervention programs, communication strategies, and monitoring processes aimed at reducing the prevalence and impact of diabetes. If responsibility is not taken for providing such an evidence base, progress will be a matter of serendipity rather than good planning.

Mission
The mission of the Diabetes Clearing House is to contribute to the reduction of the impact of diabetes in South Australia by:

- the monitoring and surveillance of the magnitude, scope and characteristics of diabetes-related issues in South Australia;
- providing evidence for improved policy and interventions by identifying the potentially modifiable factors that increase the risk of diabetes;
- supporting the implementation, and monitoring progress, of projects that address the most promising, achievable outcomes;
- working with health service providers to improve data quality and indicators of health and diabetes status;
- working with policy agencies in the design of policy initiatives and supporting data requirements.

What does the Diabetes Clearing House do?
The Clearing House provides comprehensive epidemiological information about diabetes and those who experience it in South Australia. This information is used to measure and monitor health outcomes and will help to direct policy and program development in line with the Strategic Plan. Reviewing and evaluating literature, recommending, refining, and developing measures and descriptors of diabetes, and establishing a research program where current data sources are inadequate are also roles of the Clearing House.

Specific functions of the Clearing House in 2000-2002 include:

- surveillance of the prevalence of diabetes and related issues among the South Australian population;
- development and implementation of a gestational diabetes recall system;
- assistance in the implementation and promotion of clinical practice guidelines and care pathways to assist general practitioners with diabetes management;
- support of health promotion initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of diabetes;
- support of a coordinated approach to diabetes-related data collection by diabetes health professional service providers;
- involvement in health outcomes assessment through population and clinical studies;
- promotion of the linkage of data from different information sources;
- investigation of the costs of diabetes;
- continual review of local and international literature to enhance future diabetes-related research.

The Diabetes Clearing House has a close working association with survey vehicles that provide a population focus on chronic disease including the Health Omnibus, SERCIS (Social and Environmental Risk Context Information Systems) and the Health Monitor surveys.

The Clearing House is therefore capable of benefiting from data from these surveys and initiating data collection through these surveys. There is also a history of involvement with clinical diabetes studies such as the South Australian Diabetes Study and the North West Adelaide Health Study. The Clearing House provides a model for the best use of information, and encourages a public health focus in diabetes policy making and planning. This will lead to improved health outcomes for people with diabetes and those who care for them.

For further information about the Diabetes Clearing House, please visit the web site at:
Or contact Catherine Chittleborough on 08 8226 0788 or Email catherine.chittleborough@health.sa.gov.au