



NOVEMBER 2014

CRE ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STREAM NEWSLETTER

We acknowledge and respect the traditional owners of country where we work
across this great land!

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Welcome to the electronic newsletter of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander stream of the Centre for Research Excellence in Immunisation. We are calling for stories so keep them coming in to Elizabeth at e.kpozehoven@unsw.edu.au

WELCOME DR MARLENE KONG

Dr Marlene Kong has joined the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander vaccines stream of the CRE Immunisation.



Marlene Kong is an Aboriginal doctor from the Worimi people of Port Stephens.

She is currently enrolled at UNSW as a candidate for the DrPH, commencing in 2012. She is working under the School of Public Health and Community Medicine Faculty, specifically within the Muru Marri Indigenous Health Unit. As a doctoral candidate, she participates in the Future Health Leaders Program, commencing in 2013. She is also an advanced trainee of Public Health Medicine with the Faculty of Public Health Medicine Royal Australasian College of Physicians. She has just concluded 3 years work with the NSW Ministry of

Health, occupying a Commonwealth Specialist Training Program position. Marlene has recently started in a new job with the Kirby Institute for Infection and Immunity in Society, UNSW Medicine. Her new job title is Program Head of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Program. Although now based in Sydney, Marlene has spent many years working as a GP in her past across the nation. Places have included Darwin (Danila Dilba AMS), Lismore, Hunter Valley/ Newcastle (Awabakal AMS), Glendale, Cardiff, Port Stephens (Tomaree polyclinic), Woolgoolga, Nambucca Heads (Darrimba Maara AMS), Launceston (Tas), Port Hedland (Wirraka Maya AMS), Ravenshoe (Qld – Mamu Health AMS), Weipa, Tom Price (WA), Yulara (Central Australia), Yuelumu, Papanya, Docker River and Broken Hill (Maari Ma AMS).

Her work has also taken her overseas to Africa with a humanitarian organisation during 2003 and 2004. Countries included South Sudan and Sierra Leone. Marlene has done her International Master of Public Health at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2005-2006 academic year.

Returning frequently to her home country in Port Stephens, Marlene finds connecting to her family important in keeping her well grounded.

PROJECTS UPDATES

8 research project are ongoing within the stream, there is great progress on some of these projects. Here are some of the updates:

1) Evaluation of long term effectiveness of the infant hepatitis B vaccination strategy among antenatal women in the Northern Territory (John Kaldor, Bette Liu, Marlene Kong and other researchers)

This project aims to evaluate the impact of newborn and catch-up Hepatitis B vaccination programs on Hepatitis B prevalence birthing women up to 20 years after program implementation in the Northern Territory

Discussions are now underway to extend this method to other jurisdictions with linked data currently being obtained in NSW and discussions underway in QLD to conduct similar analyses. In addition a new collaboration has commenced between researchers at the Menzies in Darwin (Stephen Tong, Joshua Davis, Jane Davies) to add additional linkages to that initially obtained in the Northern Territory which would include linkage of the NT vaccination register, laboratory data on HBV testing as well as birth cohorts of younger women.

The primary objectives of the NSW study are to determine if there are differences in HBV prevalence in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal birthing mothers and to see if there are any trends by birth cohort that may reflect the introduction of HBV immunisation programs

2) Impact of Australia's HPV vaccination program on prevalence of HPV genotypes in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women attending for Pap testing - VIP (Dina Saulo, Bette Liu, John Kaldor, Marlene Kong and other researchers)

Updates:

- Ethics approval has been obtained from all jurisdictions except Southern Queensland
- The groups of researchers in this project have run presentations, workshops and training sessions in some of the research sites
- Recruitment of study participants has started in some of the research sites

3) Linkage of the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) and State-based registers to evaluate and inform Australia's Immunisation programs (Heather Gidding, Bette Liu, Peter McIntyre and WA researchers)

The NHMRC has approved a project grant on vaccination timeliness and effectiveness and the impact improved timeliness for 2015 funding round.

Linkage of state data is currently underway and the state data linkage units (WADLB and the CHeReL) are extracting the birth cohort data to send to AIHW for linkage to ACIR. The Sax Institute are currently establishing

a study workspace in SURE.

A priority list for analyses has been developed by the investigator team including studies on factors associated with timeliness and coverage in specific regions and at-risk populations and estimating vaccine effectiveness for pneumococcal, Hib, pertussis, influenza, rotavirus and measles vaccine in birth cohorts of WA and NSW for various morbidity end-points.

Preliminary results will be presented at a face to face meeting with the Aboriginal Immunisation Reference group, established specifically for this project, before June 2015.

4) Developing an understanding of how two Aboriginal communities see and experience immunisation during pregnancy has been named Gaba Binggi meaning Good Needles in the language of Gomeroi (Kamilaroi) people. (Amy Creighton)

Updates:

- Ethics approved at all levels
- Partnerships have been developed and maintained
- A reference group has been formed and has commenced meeting
- Recruitment and interviewing of participants and preliminary data analysis has commenced
- Amy has also collaborated on

the Lowitja project: Uptake of influenza vaccination in pregnancy amongst Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

5) **Identification of culturally sensitive approaches to improve immunisation coverage and timeliness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families (Jenny Royle)**

Updates:

Approval: The project has been approved by VACCHO and has ethics approval from HREC University NSW.

Community Advisory Group: An Advisory Group is in the process of being set-up with representation from Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations in Victoria.

Funding: Seed funding was provided by the NHMRC CRE. No funding for the duration of the project has been secured as yet. Applications have been made to a variety of funding options including the Immunisation-Health Protection Branch, Dept of Health Victoria

6) **Immunisation issues among disadvantaged Aboriginal men (Megan Williams)**

Aims: To explore Aboriginal men's knowledge, attitudes and practices related to immunisation, including barriers to immunisation and opportunities for health service access.

Methods: Megan will collaborate with Mibbinbah Men's Space health promotion charity for this mixed-methods project. Starting with analysis of existing data about rates of immunisation among Aboriginal men, the successful 'Mad Bastards' feature film will be used to engage men in focus group discussions about their health service access, and that of their children and families - the context in which immunisation, and under-immunisation occurs.

7) **Developing modules for adult and adolescent immunisation on PenCAT – pilot study at Queensland Aboriginal and Islander health Council- (Rob Menzies)**

The CRE is collaborating with the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC) to develop immunisation modules for PenCAT. These modules will help services monitor and improve their immunisation performance, and provide vaccination coverage data.

Updates:

The modules were completed and sent to all PenCAT users in May 2014. Piloting was conducted in 6 sites – 4 AMSs in Queensland and 2 GP practices in Sydney. Interviews have been conducted with pilot users. Final data will be submitted by all sites in October and a report on the pilot study submitted in November

New project

8) **One 21 Seventy National Centre for Quality improvement in Indigenous Primary health care (NCQI) (Rob Menzies)**

One21seventy is a not-for-profit organisation set up with the support of the Menzies School of Health Research and the Lowitja Institute. It has 190 participating Aboriginal health services The program offers practical tools and processes that enable primary health care providers to undertake continuous quality improvement

CRE will partner with PenCat to work on data analysis through PhD program

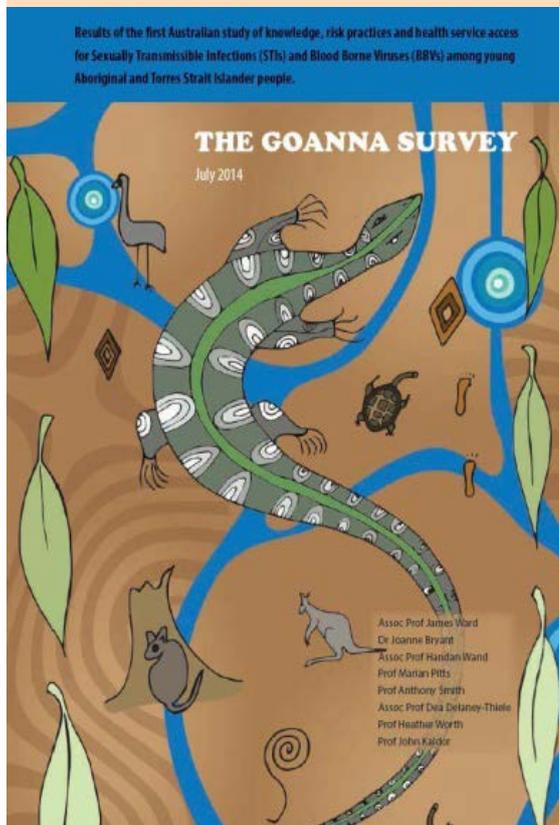
Completed Project



CONGRATULATIONS Telphia Joseph for successfully completing the research project titled "Aboriginal Medical Services contribution to Indigenous childhood immunisation in New South Wales and evaluation of reporting of the immunisations to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register "

THE GOANNA REPORT

Report: National study of Behaviour risk and health service access for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



The report presents the results of the first national survey of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 16-29 years and comprises survey results from 2877 people. The survey involved collection of data comprising four areas; (i) demographics; (ii) questions assessing knowledge of STIs and BBVs; (iii) questions relating to risk behaviours and (iv) questions related to use of and access to health services. Surveys were administered in every Australian jurisdiction. The project was initiated in 2010, and data collection occurred during 2011-2013. The survey was funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant with contributions from State and Territory Health Departments. The survey was coordinated by peak Aboriginal health organisations in each jurisdiction and NACCHO.

This is the first study of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 16 – 29 related to STIs and BBVs. With a study population of 2,877 this represents 2.6 % of the total estimated resident Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in these age groups.

The findings set the baseline for future work to occur in this area, and will help to shape program and policy into the future. [SEE FULL REPORT HERE](#)

HUNTER NEW ENGLAND IMMUNISATION ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

What is the HNE Immunisation Enhancement Project?

This innovative project was designed to assist in Closing the Gap in immunisation coverage between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and improving the timeliness of immunisations. The aim is to make contact with families of newborn Aboriginal children 2 weeks prior to baby's 6 weeks check up and immunisations and to ensure knowledge of the NSW Immunisation Schedule.

There was a 7 % gap in immunisation rates between Aboriginal children fully immunised at 12 months of age compared to the rest of the population in 2010. This left Aboriginal children unnecessarily exposed to vaccine preventable diseases. The program employs two Aboriginal Immunisation Officers, Natalie Allan in Tamworth and Katrina Clark in Newcastle Population Health Units. The use of a pre-call strategy is central to the success of this program with an initial reduction in the gap from 7% down to 1%.

HNE Immunisation Enhancement project won the Poster Competition at the 14th PHAA National Immunisation Conference in Melbourne in June. Congratulations HNE Immunisation Enhancement team!

[MORE INFORMATION](#)

IN THE SPOTLIGHT - MS MEGAN WILLIAMS



Megan Williams is a lecturer with Muru Marri in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine, UNSW. Megan is descendent of the Wiradjuri and Pallawa people through her father's family.

Megan has experience in health service delivery and research, and is nearing completion of a PhD about social support among urban Aboriginal people post-prison release. Megan has planned a mixed-methods research project about immunisation issues particularly among Aboriginal people who have been engaged in the criminal justice system, working with Professor James Ward and Mibbinbah Men's Spaces, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health promotion charity.

What is your most memorable experience in doing research with the Aboriginal communities?

My most memorable experience was working on the 'Mad Bastards: Be the best you can be'

project. This project developed an 'outreach education package' to accompany the much-loved Australian feature film 'Mad Bastards'. The film had already been released, and over 70 requests had been made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia to show it. The film maker, Brendan Fletcher from Bush Turkey Films, received a grant to produce an 'education outreach package' – to some 'something' with the film because it resonated so well with people and was a powerful tool to bring people together. Through networks I was invited to be part of a team to produce the package. It was a clear opportunity to translate my PhD and other research findings about Aboriginal peoples' processes of support in the criminal justice system and post-prison release, and share my skills in writing and project work. Together with my close collaborators at Mibbinbah Men's Spaces, we worked with The Republic, a production company, as well as the film maker, a media consultant and other leaders in Aboriginal male health care in Australia. We thoroughly appreciated being exposed to each other's' worlds, and sharing our experience and networks. Our Working Group has some further funding and Muru Marri colleagues have designed and piloted evaluation research – there remains much to do. I have seen the Mad Bastards film many times, but am still humbled and amazed each time – to see the power of the human story accompany and enliven our research on such sensitive issues for Aboriginal people.

NEW NHMRC GRANT



Heather Gidding has won the NHMRC Project grant "Vaccination timeliness in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal infants: risk factors for delayed vaccination and impact on disease burden—a record linkage study"

CONGRATULATIONS HEATHER GIDDING AND THE TEAM

IN THE SPOTLIGHT - DR JENNY ROYLE



Dr Jenny Royle is a *Community Immunisation Paediatrician, Medical Officer of Health at Stonnington, chair of Eastern Region Immunisation Committee and conjoint senior lecturer at the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at UNSW.*

Jenny has 15 years experience providing clinical immunisation advice for parents and hospital staff, Community Immunisation Providers and the Victorian Department of Health. As an immunisation educator Jenny provides immunisation up-dates for Victorian and national Immunisation Providers. In these up-dates she advocates for Aboriginal Identification and Cultural Safety and facilitates presentations by local Aboriginal Health Workers.

Jenny's project is to identify culturally sensitive approaches to improve immunisation coverage and timeliness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. She is collaborating with Brendon Kelaher, Robert Menzies, Wendy Bissinger, Peter McIntyre, Amy Creighton, James Ward, Kate Russo, Julie Leask, Telphia Joseph, and other members of the CRE team. Jenny has been consulting with VACCHO and staff at Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations throughout Victoria. The community input in the preparation of this study has been invaluable.

What is your most memorable experience in doing research with the Aboriginal communities?

Consultation with staff working at Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations throughout Victoria has been both helpful and enlightening. I have visited these organisations in inner and outer metropolitan Melbourne (Fitzroy, Dandenong, Geelong), regional sites within an hour or two of Melbourne (Bendigo, Ballarat, Warrnambool) and more regional sites (Albury-Wodonga and Mildura). I have been welcomed at every Community Health Organisation I have visited. I have benefited greatly from the discussions, opinions and knowledge about their holistic approach to patient care. I am building relationships with Aboriginal Health Workers at each centre and through this engagement I am developing a deeper understanding of cultural safety and therefore approaches to my research in these diverse communities. An example of this personal engagement has been with Lyn Rickerby, midwife at the Dandenong and District Aboriginal Medical Centre (Bunurong Health Service). Through our discussions I have developed a greater understanding of the local Aboriginal communities in this area and the engagement of their service with young mothers and their infants. The strength of their holistic approach is that immunisation is one aspect of primary health care in an all-of-family and all-of-life model of care. Through Lyn I have participated with health promotion on live 3KnD 1503 (local Indigenous radio), and workshop discussions with the Dept. of Health Victoria. Lyn has been guiding me on cultural safety and appropriate wording of academic pieces that include information on members of the Aboriginal community.



**NHMRC CENTRE OF RESEARCH EXCELLENCE
in POPULATION HEALTH RESEARCH**

Immunisation in Under Studied and Special Risk Populations:
'Closing the Gap in Knowledge through a Multidisciplinary Approach'



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