

Trachoma Elimination Update: December 2013

CLEAN FACES, STRONG EYES!



Introduction

The Indigenous Eye Health Unit is working to improve access to eye care and address the four main eye conditions. In consultation with others, we have developed a Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision containing 42 recommendations for Government to improve eye health and access to services and treatment.

Vision Loss accounts for 11% of the gap in health and most importantly this gap is amenable to treatment. A pair of glasses can improve a person's quality of life and cataract surgery can restore sight overnight. Timely access to laser treatment for those who have diabetic retinopathy can prevent 98% of the vision loss from diabetes. As you all know, with improved hygiene, antibiotics and surgery, blindness from trachoma can be eliminated.

Launch of Annual Update on the Implementation of the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision

On Melbourne Cup day in Hobart at the 45th Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) Congress, the 2013 Annual Update on the Implementation of the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision was launched by Lisa Briggs, CEO of NACCHO and Dr Stephen Best, President of RANZCO.

Hugh Taylor emphasised that we are collectively making progress to close the gap for vision. This was also an opportunity for leaders in Indigenous eye care to come together to present a national perspective. Presenters at the symposium later that day spoke about key challenges in Indigenous eye health in the urban and rural context and how they are being overcome with different models.



Mr Andrew Harris Pres. OAA, Dr Stephen Best Pres RANZCO, Ms Elise Archer MP, Ms Lisa Briggs CEO NACCHO, Ms Jennifer Gersbeck CEO V2020A and Prof. Hugh Taylor AC

Trachoma Rates

The findings of the 2012 Australian Trachoma Surveillance Report were released in August this year. The figures are terrific. In screened communities, trachoma in five to nine year olds has dropped from 14% in 2009 to 4% in 2012. However, hot spots still remain. Only 58% of screened communities met the clean face target in children aged 5-9 years. It is crucial for everyone to keep up the good work to ensure we can eliminate trachoma from Australia.

Australia's progress to eliminate trachoma is reported through annual surveillance reports prepared by the Kirby Institute, University of New South Wales, with data provided by state and territory governments.

www.kirby.unsw.edu.au/surveillance/australian-trachoma-surveillance-report

Trachoma Story Kits and Additional Resources

The new Trachoma Story Kits will have reached the National Mailing Centre in Canberra by mid December 2013. 500 Trachoma Story Kits, a limited number of Trachoma Resource DVD's, Milpa the Trachoma Goanna Temporary Tattoos, A2 Community Flipcharts and A4/A3 sized Footy Posters can be ordered online at www.iehu.unimelb.edu.au/the_trachoma_story_kit/ordering

With the support of the Department of Health, the resources and freight are now free of charge which is most welcome for programs in very remote settings.



The new DVD included with the Kit demonstrates just how widespread the reach and uptake of the Trachoma Story Kit resources has been in three years. The 2013 DVD includes the clinical education tools and the interactive Trachoma Grading Tool as well as school and community health promotion materials.

There are 40 additional items with TV commercials and jingles for kids, women's radio and dozens of community songs and initiatives for schools and family centres. Finally there about 20 examples of community initiatives and adaptations of the Kit content to enable local programs to use the materials for local use in local language with local people.



Hygiene Football Clinics with the Demons

Three football clinics were held in July with Melbourne Football Club (MFC) at Santa Teresa, Tennant Creek and before the game at TIO stadium in Darwin. Wild Geese Construction Company recently built a new childcare centre at Santa Teresa community and wanted to celebrate their partnership with MFC with a footy clinic. Support from the Alice Springs trachoma and holistic hygiene programs helped to make the Santa Teresa event a success.

The Tennant Creek Trachoma Elimination Footy Clinic had an eventful start with an emergency landing of the eight seat plane in Alice Springs. The emergency landing with the Melbourne Footy players on board created media coverage of the trachoma elimination campaign. www.melbournefc.com.au/video/2013-07-17/dees-in-darwin-tennant-creek



The day was a welcome event to the remote township and interagency collaboration was fantastic making the day a success. The attendance of youth and community members was encouraging with community buses travelling in from surrounding town camps and communities. The Clean Faces, Strong Eyes message was reinforced with the hygiene station and support from the trachoma elimination team.



Top Left: 'Clean Faces, Strong Eyes' Hygiene Station. Top Right: Face painting was a big hit. Lower Left: Hygiene Station in use. Lower Right: MFC players with footy clinic participants. Below: fans getting autographs



Milpa the Trachoma Goanna added some colour and movement to the Clean Faces Strong Eyes campaign at the AFL NT footy game between MFC and the Brisbane Lions. Trachoma elimination community service announcements were also broadcast on the TIO stadium.



Milpa and guests enjoy the football

Mr Peter Jackson the new CEO of Melbourne Football Club is supportive of the on-going relationship between MFC and the elimination of trachoma and has offered the 2014 fixture as an opportunity to host trachoma elimination footy clinics. In 2014 MFC will play a pre-season match in Alice Springs against Geelong. During Indigenous Round 11 MFC will play against Port Adelaide and the contest will be against Fremantle in Round 16 at TIO Stadium, which will see the Club play in Darwin for the fifth consecutive season.

The Indigenous Eye Health Unit and MFC have co-signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding and the IEHU now enjoys an official presence on MFC website community link page.

Newly appointed MFC Trachoma Elimination Ambassador Dom Barry will feature in new health promotion and social marketing resources such as posters and Radio CSA's in 2014. We congratulate Dom and Aaron on being selected to represent the Indigenous All-Stars in the recent trip to Ireland.



The Ngumbin Reference Group, Katherine West Health Board, Northern Territory

Fiona Lange recently reported back to the Ngumbin Reference Group who had spent over a year carefully guiding the development of the Trachoma Story Kits in 2009-2010.

Eight current and past Aboriginal Health Workers representing communities in over 260,000 sq km south-west of Katherine were very pleased their work resulted in a resource made 'good way' that is now endorsed by the Department of Health.

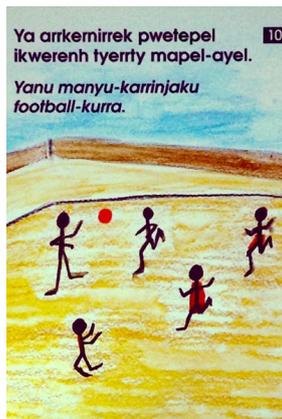
The group was especially delighted about the widespread reach and community adaptations of the Trachoma Story Kits.



L-R Back: David Lines, Joseph Cox, Deborah Jones, Brian Pedwell
L-R Middle: Dianne Hampton, Jocelyn Victor, Helen Morris, Fiona Lange
L-R Front: Lynette Johns, Rebecca Cooney

More Local Trachoma Initiatives

Local community initiatives based on the Trachoma Story Kits have come to life in dozens of communities in the NT. The personal hygiene talking poster combines nose blowing, hand washing, face washing and not sharing towels. This will be rolled out in ten communities and in five languages. The Trachoma Story in Eastern Arrente language by Hazel Presley of Ti Tree was the work of 27 individuals and six organisations.



Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust

Professor Taylor has been appointed to the Global Expert Advisory Committee Panel. One of the objectives of the Diamond Jubilee Trust is a Commonwealth-wide commitment to eliminate trachoma with support to be provided to Australia for health promotion and social marketing activities.



National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Conference, Adelaide.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Conference is held every two years and where the F and E of the SAFE strategy get on the agenda.



Fiona Lange attended again this year with about 20 trachoma program staff from around Australia. Down to earth practical presentations and discussions were held and best-practice showcased to improve environmental health and living conditions for Indigenous remote, regional and urban communities.

Reference to trachoma increased from three to ten times since the last conference and face washing is included in many more holistic health and hygiene programs. Collaborations across programs and disciplines are growing and there was real excitement as many creative and engaging ideas were shared.

Mapping ICTC International of Collation of trachoma control

A fascinating project in Africa is the mass trachoma screening in a number of countries undertaken in remote areas that are difficult to access. Using smartphones, data is collected and uploaded daily to ensure speedy transmission of data compared with the old fashioned paper collection and delayed data entry. This mapping exercise is providing a real time picture of the rates of trachoma. Funded by the UK Department for International Development, it is an excellent use of technology to aid the world push for the elimination of trachoma by 2020.

www.trachomacoalition.org/

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Amata football oval in the remote desert of South Australia on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands. The IEHU recently travelled to SA and WA to discover whats happening in trachoma elimination - more on this next year!

We have had a brilliant year working with dedicated, creative and tireless trachoma program staff and inspirational remote community members across Australia.

Everyone at the IEHU wishes you a wonderful Christmas and summer holiday and we definitely look forward meeting up again to keep on Closing the Gap for Vision in 2014.

