

Indigenous Eye Health Newsletter June 2017



Close the Gap for Vision by 2020 national conference 2017

IEH was delighted to welcome over 100 attendees from all jurisdictions and representing national, state and territory, regional and local organisations to the Close the Gap for Vision by 2020 National Conference 2017 held in March. The participants gathered to share learnings and experiences to improve Indigenous eye health. It was also a time to discuss and plan what needs to be done to close the gap for vision by 2020.

Regions discussed the importance of collaborative partnerships and networks, engagement of dedicated project officers, at least for a period of time, jurisdictional oversight and support and promoting eye health messages to facilitate Indigenous eye health improvements. Short length funding cycles and data access and sharing were identified as key challenges that impede regional progress.

Data from the National Eye Health Survey (2016) and National Trachoma Surveillance Report (2016) presented at the conference indicates that the inequity gap for vision between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is closing.

Further work is required to improve performance monitoring. Regions confirmed difficulty with existing data systems and the consequent problems this creates to measure and monitor service needs. Jurisdictional coordination projects and regional stakeholder groups are contributing simplified data collection and monitoring approaches.

Nationwide, a number of Indigenous eye care initiatives were identified that have introduced innovation and improvement. The Australian Government has provided specific additional funds to support much of this work. Some initiatives target specific eye conditions such as cataract, diabetes, refractive error and trachoma. Other initiatives focus on providing clinical care to remote settings using technology or improving access and capacity of services. Improved engagement with state health departments was considered critical to further outcome improvement.

National meetings are planned in coming years to support the collective work towards the 2020 goal.



Participants attending the Close the Gap for Vision by 2020 National Conference 2017 held in March.

Indigenous Eye Health
Melbourne School of Population and Global Health
The University of Melbourne
T: +61 3 8344 9320 | W: iehu.unimelb.edu.au
E: Indigenous-EyeHealth@unimelb.edu.au

Trachoma health promotion funding

The Australian Government Department of Health has provided IEH funding of \$3.26 million over four years from 2017/18 to 2020/21 to extend the Trachoma Health Promotion Project.

This funding allows IEH to plan activities to drive the elimination of trachoma by 2020. The funding also provides the opportunity to build on the close links with the NT, SA and WA screening and treatment programs and to continue our collaborative activities with them.

Generous support from our donors together with funding from the Australian Government has enabled us to scale up our activities and to work with more communities and provide a greater range of resources. Milpa and the "Clean Faces, Strong Eyes" message reminds children about washing their faces and hands. IEH will continue work to improve access to functional bathrooms for children to use to keep their faces clean.

Paul Ramsay Foundation

IEH are delighted to welcome support from the Paul Ramsay Foundation to assist the implementation and roll out of the Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision from 2017 until 2021.



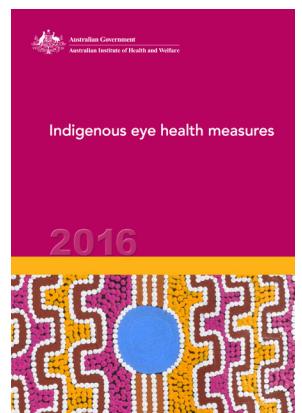
This donation will extend and increase the reach of the Roadmap implementation activities and resources.

IEH will continue to support the establishment and operation of all jurisdictional Indigenous eye health stakeholder committees, establish relationships, educate and assist all Primary Health Networks Indigenous eye health activities, and support and monitor activity of regional stakeholder networks across the country to achieve full national coverage.

<https://paulramsayfoundation.org.au/closing-the-gap-for-vision/>

AIHW data

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has released the first national report on 22 Indigenous eye health measures. The measures cover the prevalence of eye health conditions, diagnosis and treatment services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, the eye health workforce and outreach services.



The report examines differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, as well as differences by factors such as age, sex, remoteness, and jurisdiction. Some of the indicators are also provided at a Primary Health Network level which provides valuable insight to regional outcomes.

At the launch of the report, The Minister for Indigenous Health, the Hon. Ken Wyatt said "While the report shows improvements are being made in Closing the Gap in Indigenous eye health, more needs to be done."

<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=6012955968>

TRACHOMA

Sean Choolburra trip in Utopia NT

During February, Comedian Sean Choolburra visited 5 outstations of the Utopia Region, NT. Sean used comedy, dance and the didgeridoo to yarn about trachoma and the importance of 'Clean Faces, Strong Eyes'. Paula Wines (CDC), Georgina Phillips and Rachael Ferguson (IEH) spoke with school and community groups about the importance of good hygiene and provided further information about trachoma.

Milpa made several appearances and was well received. The performances were attended by approximately 170 Children and 35 Adults over the 5 outstations.



CAAMA Radio promoted the tour.

<http://caama.com.au/news/2017/sean-choolburra-uses-comedy-to-combat-trachoma>

IHHP Art Murals in 5 communities

Beautiful large murals depicting the dreaming stories and featuring important cultural imagery, are being created by local community members in five remote NT communities.

Indigenous Hip Hop Projects, IEH, CDC and NT Health are working with youth groups, school children, local artists, CDP groups and others to highlight the unique strengths of each different community. In some communities, Milpa pops up in other artwork nearby to remind kids about washing their faces and hands.



Two of the new murals in Titjikala and Papunya

New MFC CSAs

Earlier this year we filmed two new CSAs with Melbourne Football Club and Milpa.

It was fantastic to be able to include the AFL women players Aliesha Newman and Mia-Rae Clifford.



The ads are airing on Imparja TV and 5 new posters have been produced.

IEH and Uncle Jimmy's trachoma song "Let's get rid of Trachoma in the APY Lands"

School children, the Pukatja Reggae Band and community members from the APY Lands in SA worked with IEH staff and Uncle Jimmy Thumbs Up! to create awareness of trachoma through song. They made a creative, catchy and educational song about simple things to do to prevent trachoma. The lead singer was rising star, Aaron Fraser from Kenmore Park and the video was shown on national television.

<http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2016/11/25/seeing-clearly-through-song>



"Lets get rid of Trachoma in the APY lands"

Alice Springs donor trip

Members of the BB and A Miller Foundation travelled to Alice Springs and out to two remote NT communities to see for themselves how their support is accelerating trachoma elimination.

The group travelled with the IEH trachoma program staff and trachoma nurses from CDC to see different health promotion activities in action; Melbourne Football Club Footy Clinic at Santa Teresa, Yamba Milpa Roadshow in Harts Range and the AFL game at Traeger Park in Alice Springs between the Melbourne Demons and the Gold Coast Suns for the Dreamtime Round.



Yamba and Milpa Trachoma Healthy Living Roadshow with Jacinta Price at Harts Range was one of the 8 performance in remote communities.

Rotary Club Support

Rotary Melbourne is supporting the elimination of trachoma by 2020. They have been working with IEH and talking to people in the APY Lands, SA and the NT and WA about what Rotary can do to assist.



Rotary Clubs around Australia are also getting on board to support the efforts of all the communities, governments and non-government organisations who are behind the ongoing efforts to eliminate trachoma from Australia. We are in discussion with them to work out the best way for Rotary Clubs to support clean faces and access to functional bathrooms in remote communities in central Australia.

Ninti One Evaluation

Ninti-One has undertaken an evaluation of the IEH health promotion activities in six remote communities. Aboriginal Community Researchers conducted face to face interviews and focus groups in the communities. The level of engagement with community members was high and the evaluation benefitted from the great feedback and suggestions for improvements to the program.

One of the questions asked "did you understand what Milpa was telling you?" In response, over 85 per cent of respondents indicated they had some understanding of the key message. We have already begun work to respond to some of the feedback by developing more information around the transmission of trachoma. The evaluation report will be available on our website shortly.

Bondi Labs

IEH has been working with Bondi Labs, Swinburne University's Digital Innovation Lab to develop a trachoma training simulation module. The finished product will be based on the SAFE strategy and train clinical staff in screening and treating of trachoma. Bondi Labs uses pioneering software to develop virtual reality and augmented reality products. This will make the training simulation module more life-like which enhances the training experience.



Diabetes Eye Care

Equipment launch

IEH welcomes Australian Government funding for the Provision of Eye Health Equipment and Training program to increase access to eye health and vision care services for Aboriginal Australians. The program will provide eye health testing equipment, along with relevant training and support, to health services in more than 100 sites across Australia.

Brien Holden Vision Institute and The Australian College of Optometry, will co-lead the national program, working with the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia, the Centre for Eye Health and Optometry Australia.

<http://www.vision2020australia.org.au/media/2017-04-27/vision-2020-australia-welcomes-funding-for-indigenous-eye-health>

DR Grading

The Online Diabetic Retinopathy Grading Course has been upgraded to improve the user learning experience for. The course is appropriate for all health professionals involved in retinal screening who wish to grade retinal changes associated with diabetes, including those using retinal photography.

A competency based exam evaluates the participant's ability to detect and grade retinopathy, as well as determine the appropriate referral timelines. A certificate of competency is awarded on successful completion of the examinations.

A new language, Farsi, has been added to the existing six languages (English, Chinese, Farsi, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Urdu) and follows the International Council of Ophthalmology and the Australian National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines for diabetic eye care.



<http://www.drgrading.iehu.unimelb.edu.au>

Check Today, See Tomorrow and Lions

The Lions Eye Health Program - Australia has supported the printing and distribution of 'Check Today, See Tomorrow' diabetes eye care resources. These resources carry the important message of annual eye examinations for Indigenous people with diabetes.

Lions is supporting the distribution of these resources to mainstream general practice settings and pharmacies.



Lions support for software solution cdmNet

The Lions Eye Health Program – Australia has also supported the development of software for diabetes eye care in primary health care settings, particularly designed for Indigenous clinics and communities. The software is a new element of cdmNet (Chronic Disease Management Net developed by Precedence Health Care) and overlays existing clinic practice management systems and generates a specific program for diabetic retinopathy (DR) screening and management.

The software is being developed through AMS consultation and trial (two AMS in Victoria covering five clinical sites). The software is functional and currently being used and will continue to be improved and refined through additional use and feedback.

Partners - AHCSA

The Trachoma and Eye Health team at Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (AHCSA) ordered the 'Check Today, See Tomorrow' health promotion resources as they visit many Aboriginal controlled health centres across South Australia. They provided the following feedback:

"The resource is easy to set up and pack away. The pictures/ diagrams and big clear font is a plus, considering most people we share this resource with have or had eye health issues.



The Flipchart set up in the clinics sparks interest and curiosity with community members which leads into conversation about diabetic retinopathy and provides an opportunity to educate people about the disease. So, it's a good promotion and engaging tool / resource to have!"



Regional implementation

IEH is currently working in 35 of 51 regions across Australia. These are some of the examples of our work implementing the Roadmap.

Charleville and Cunnamulla

IEH facilitated a workshop with the various providers in the eye care pathway in Charleville and Cunnamulla in South West Queensland in February. The regional implementation team worked with participants including the local Aboriginal Medical Services, Cunnamulla Aboriginal Corporation for Health and Charleville and Western Areas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Limited to map the pathway and identify improvements to drive greater access and a more seamless service.

Charleville and Cunnamulla continued

This workshop was the first of a series planned by Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC), the state affiliate for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, and Checkup, the Queensland fundholder for outreach funding, across Queensland to develop appropriate regional coordination of eye care.

These workshops will build on the work that IEH has been doing with QAIHC and Checkup at a state level to implement the roadmap and drive coordination at this jurisdictional level.



Palm Island

The second region identified by QAIHC and Checkup to facilitate regional coordination of eye care services was Palm Island, off Townsville. Last month the regional implementation team ran a workshop for the range of providers on the island representing over 8 organisations including the local primary health care providers, optometrists, ophthalmologists, the Townsville Hospital and the IDEAS Van.

These sessions are designed to promote discussion about the current system of care and how it can be improved with the ultimate objective that the local region assumes carriage of the process. We will return later this month to discuss the recommended approach and what needs to be done by the group to achieve change.

Grampians

The great achievements of the Grampians Region Aboriginal Eye Health Advisory Group (GRAEHAG) with their success in enhancing eye health outcomes in the Grampians region is reported in the Medical Journal of Australia.

The work in the Grampians was a highly collaborative project and included the Aboriginal organisations in the region such as Ballarat and Districts Aboriginal Corporation, the Budja Budja Aboriginal Cooperative, the Goolum-Goolum Aboriginal Co-operative and the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO). Other key members of the group included ACO, the Grampians Region DHHS, the Western Victoria Primary Health Network, Rural Workforce Agency Victoria and the Department of Education and Training. Former IEH team member, Roman Zwolak was the project officer for the group.

<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2017/206/2/grampians-closing-gap-indigenous-eye-health>

South Australia

IEH attended the launch of the South Australian Aboriginal Chronic Disease Consortium, a collaborative partnership formed between the South Australian Aboriginal Health Partnership and the South Australian Academic Health Science and Translation Centre. The Consortium will aim to drive, coordinate and sustain a sector approach to the implementation of the SA Aboriginal Heart and Stroke, Diabetes and cancer control plans.

IEH participated in a workshop to identify priorities for specific to each plan, as well as priorities which span across the three plans and will continue to advocate for the importance of appropriate eye care in diabetes management.

In the News

Ken Wyatt

The Hon. Ken Wyatt was promoted to Minister for Aged Care and Indigenous Health following a ministerial reshuffle in January.



In an interview with Stan Grant on the 7.30 report the newly anointed Minister refers to IEH achievements in eye health.
<http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2017/s4606099.htm>

The Global Ophthalmologist

Professor Taylor sat down with The Global Ophthalmologist and talked about his career in a wide-ranging interview.

<https://theophthalmologist.com/issues/1016/on-a-mission>

Guardian article

The gap in rates of blindness between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people has halved since 2008. Professor Hugh Taylor was interviewed by the Guardian newspaper on Closing the Gap Day in March.



<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/mar/16/gap-in-indigenous-blindness-rates-halved-in-nine-years-expert-says>

Game Changer

Professor Taylor wrote in the Medical Journal of Australia about the new medicare item for retinal photography screening representing 'A game changer for eye care for diabetes'.

<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2017/206/1/game-changer-eye-care-diabetes>

Staff Update

We welcome Lauren Jeffs, Trachoma Health Promotion Coordinator based in Melbourne and are delighted that Jessie Motlik has re-joined the team following maternity leave.

We farewell Carol Holden, Emily O'Kearney and Uma Jatkar and thank them for their contribution and wish them all the best for the future.

Thank You

Indigenous Eye Health would like to take this opportunity to thank the many community members, colleagues and stakeholders who are part of and support our work.

We would like to acknowledge our generous donors and funders including: The BB & A Miller Foundation, CBM Australia, the Cybec Foundation, the Aspen Foundation, the Australian Government Department of Health and private donors and welcome the Paul Ramsay Foundation.

We would also like to thank our Advisory Board for their leadership and guidance.

Like our Indigenous Eye Health Facebook page

Indigenous Eye Health - IEH

www.facebook.com/iehu.unimelb

Like our Trachoma Facebook page

Clean Faces, Strong Eyes

www.facebook.com/cleanfacesstrongeyes

Diabetes Eye Care Facebook page

Check Today See Tomorrow

www.facebook.com/CheckTodaySeeTomorrow

