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NICS UPDATE

N H M R C

National Institute of Clinical Studies

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Welcome to the latest issue of NICS Update.

For information about any items in this issue, please contact nicspr@nhmrc.gov.au.

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NHMRC Clinical Practice Guidelines Portal and Register launch

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) today launched a new national Clinical Practice Guidelines Portal that will provide links to current Australian guidelines developed by governments, professional colleges, specialty societies and non-government agencies.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Health, the Hon Mark Butler MP, launched the Portal and Register in Melbourne on Friday 26 February.

Clinical practice guidelines are critical tools used by health professionals and researchers to improve the health of Australians, yet in the past have often been hard to locate, difficult to access and sometimes out of date.

The new portal is a 'one stop shop' for clinicians, researchers, policy makers and consumers to access guidelines developed during the preceding five years for use in the Australian health care system.

In addition to the Portal, the NHMRC has developed a national clinical practice Guidelines in Development Register. This Register contains information about clinical practice guidelines that are planned or currently being developed in Australia.

The Australian guidelines are important tools that ensure the most recent Australian and international research is evaluated and applied across different health care settings to enable better health outcomes to be achieved for all.

Australia is a world leader in guideline development and implementation and the new Portal will improve access to these evidence based resources.

Evidence needs to be provided to health practitioners and policy makers through rigorously developed up-to-date guidelines, evidence statements and implementation resources; the new portal will make this easier.

The Register is about efficiency, collaboration and transparency. It will provide information to help policy makers, funders and guideline developers better co-ordinate guideline activities in Australia and avoid duplication.

The Portal will improve the quality of clinical decisions, improve efficiency, improve consistency of care, reduce unnecessary morbidity and mortality and ultimately improve the quality of life for all Australians.

In developing the Clinical Practice Guidelines Portal, NHMRC consulted widely with Australian clinicians and guideline developers, guided by a specially convened group of major guideline developers. The Register has been specifically designed to enable Australian guideline developers to promote their work and network with other guideline developers.

The Portal and Register can now be accessed at www.clinicalguidelines.gov.au

NHMRC TRIP Fellowships – new closing date

The NHMRC Translating Research Into Practice (TRIP) Fellowships have a **new application closing date: Friday, 5 March 2010, 5:00pm AEDST.**

This new fellowship scheme identifies and supports future leaders in the science and practice of research translation.

The funding policy, guide to applicants and application forms are available on the [NHMRC website](#)

Please note that applications to this new scheme will not be via NHMRC's new online Research Grants Management System (RGMS).

Volatile Substance Use (VSU) Guideline

The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH) in the Department of Health and Ageing has commissioned the National Health and Medical Research Council to produce a systematically developed clinical practice guideline for the management of volatile substance use (VSU).

VSU refers to the practice of deliberately inhaling substances that are volatile (vaporous) at ambient temperatures for the purpose of intoxication.

The volatile substances covered by the guideline can be classified into the following categories:

- Solvents – glues and petrol (that vaporise at room temperatures)
- Gases – medical anaesthetics and fuel gases (e.g. lighter fuels)
- Aerosols – sprays containing propellants and solvents

VSU is a significant problem for some Australian communities. The short and long term consequences of use can be devastating not only for the individual and their family but also for the broader community.

These consequences can range from the physical effects of individual intoxication to the cost of caring for a chronic user with brain damage or the cost of delivering appropriate services to geographically diverse communities. Services are often based on those for alcohol or other drug users, and may not be appropriate for VSU.

There is a clear need for clinical practice guidelines to be specifically developed to provide evidence-based recommendations for good practice in the treatment of VSU.

Work on the guideline commenced in 2009. It will assist health professionals to identify, assess and treat people suffering the effects of volatile substances, in metropolitan, rural and remote communities across Australia.

The guideline will be suitable for use by health professionals including: medical practitioners; nurses; Aboriginal health workers; alcohol and other drug workers; and allied mental health workers. The guideline will be applicable in primary health, emergency, mental health, alcohol and drug service settings.

The development of the guideline is being led by a multidisciplinary committee of experts from across Australia, all of whom bring considerable knowledge and experience of managing VSU in diverse settings.

The guideline development process will be undertaken in accordance with NHMRC criteria and will involve the review of existing evidence. Where evidence is lacking, expert opinion will be sought to make recommendations.

Once a draft of the guideline has been developed, it will be available on the NHMRC website for public comment. This is expected to occur in late 2010. All submissions from this public consultation will be considered by the development committee before the release of the final guideline in 2011.

To register to receive updates on the progress of the guideline, including notification of the availability of the draft guideline for comment, please email details to vsu@nhmrc.gov.au or for further information, please visit www.nhmrc.gov.au/nics