Researchers, communities, government and Not-for-Profit sector band together to improve Indigenous health outcomes

Health and medical researchers have teamed up with Indigenous community organisations, policymakers, businesses and others on the frontlines of healthcare delivery to help improve the health of Indigenous communities, as part of five National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Partnership Project grants announced today.

The grants are co-funded by NHMRC and partners, which includes the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory, Ngaanyatjarra Health Service, Ernst and Young, the Northern Territory Department of Health, amongst others.

Of the $7 million distributed through the Partnership Projects scheme, over $5 million was awarded to researchers to investigate ways to improve the health outcomes of Indigenous Australians, the largest proportion allocated for this purpose in the history of the scheme.

The grants aim to find ways to improve access to dialysis treatments, improve development outcomes for children, reduce cardiovascular inequality and improve testing of sexually transmitted diseases.

CEO Professor Warwick Anderson was pleased with the outcome and optimistic that the research would result in improved health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“It is in everyone’s interest that we close the gap in Indigenous health outcomes. So it’s great to see this commitment from a broad spectrum of Indigenous groups, organisations and governments to work with researchers to develop solutions to health issues central to Indigenous communities,” Professor Anderson said.

“The health issues faced by our Indigenous people are our nation’s responsibility to solve so it is important that our researchers work in partnership with communities to help develop solutions that will make a lasting difference to health care and prevention,” Professor Anderson said.

The grants fit with the NHMRC’s commitment to improving health outcomes of Indigenous Australians by ensuring that at least 5% of its annual research budget is directed to research directly aimed at improving the health of Indigenous Australians.

As well as the Partnership Projects, there was also $43 million marked for Indigenous health research from other schemes to tackle diseases such as chronic kidney disease, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and cardiovascular disease.
The grants were part of a $539.8 million announcement made today by Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Minister for Health Peter Dutton, for 773 grants across a broad range of diseases and health conditions.

**Partnership Project Summaries**

**Professor Sven Silburn, Menzies School of Health Research, child development ($924,761)**
This project will combine data from health, education, child protection and justice agencies to improve developmental outcomes of Northern Territory children and to develop ways to reduce outcome gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in areas such as health and education.

Partners:
- Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory
- Northern Territory Department of Children and Families
- Northern Territory Department of Education
- Northern Territory Department of Health

**Professor Alan Cass, Menzies School of Health Research, kidney disease ($1,160,334)**
Indigenous Australians living in remote areas suffer end-stage kidney disease at rates up to 30 times the national average and many have to relocate to urban areas to access treatment, at great expense. This project will compare different models of dialysis care and investigate the financial, social-economic and quality of life impacts of each model on patients, family and key stakeholders.

Partners:
- Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory
- Ernst and Young
- Northern Territory Department of Health
- Northern Territory Department of Housing
- Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Paylantjaku Tjutaku

**Associate Professor Rebecca Guy, University of New South Wales, sexually transmitted infections ($1,406,911)**
It is estimated that at any given time, half of all young people in remote Aboriginal communities have a sexually transmissible infection (STI) that could be easily treated with antibiotics. This project aims to better control the spread of STIs and improve health outcomes by implementing point-of-care testing and treatment for STIs in 20 Aboriginal primary health services in regional and remote areas of Western Australia over a 5-year period.

Partners:
- Cepheid
- Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services Council
- Ngaanyatjarra Health Service
- The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia
- Western Australia Department of Health

**Professor Andrew Lloyd, University of New South Wales, hepatitis C ($1,495,101)**
Hepatitis C is associated with considerable morbidity, mortality and health-related costs, but recent advancements show antiviral therapy is an effective prevention strategy for high-risk populations. This project will survey and treat hepatitis in the prison environment, given that population’s large burden of chronic infection, with high ongoing transmission rates and a lack of effective prevention strategies.
Partners:
- Corrective Services NSW
- Gilead Sciences
- Hepatitis NSW
- Justice Health and Forensic Mental Health Network
- NSW Health
- NSW Users and AIDS Association

**Professor Emily Banks, Australian National University, cardiovascular disease ($527,968)**
This project will identify and prioritise points for intervention to reduce cardiovascular disease inequalities in Australia across four domains of disadvantage: socioeconomic status, Aboriginality, remoteness and mental health. The team will also conduct a systematic review of the effectiveness of various cardiovascular disease interventions, with the aim of improving health and reducing health inequalities.

Partners:
- The Agency for Clinical Innovation
- The Consumers Health Forum of Australia
- The Heart Foundation

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**Further information**
More information about the grants announced today can be found on the NHMRC website under [Outcomes of funding rounds](#).