e-news Volume 6 - April 2012

From the Director

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the latest edition of the Baker IDI Central Australia e-newsletter, which provides a timely opportunity to let you know about several senior appointments to our Central Australia team and to update you on some of our research projects.

New guidelines relating to the treatment of chronic kidney disease have been released, with new guidelines on Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) and Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) to follow shortly. Baker IDI has also played a key role in writing a national report on diabetes, released last month. The report provides a sobering reminder about the growing prevalence of diabetes, particularly amongst Indigenous Australians.

I hope you find this newsletter informative and look forward to continued discussions with you on important healthcare issues that you and your colleagues face in Central Australia.

Professor Garry Jennings, Director, Baker IDI

Farewell to Professor Alex Brown

In 2007 Professor Alex Brown commenced as Head of Baker IDI’s Indigenous Health Research program in Central Australia. Since then he has established a strong research program and important collaborations for Baker IDI throughout the Indigenous health sector. In July he will take up a role with the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute. Baker IDI is pleased to have supported the development of one of Australia’s leading Indigenous health researchers and we look forward to continuing our relationship with him.
New appointments at Baker IDI

The Institute is pleased to announce the appointment of several senior researchers to the Central Australia Indigenous Health Research Unit. These include:

**Associate Professor Graeme Maguire, Senior Clinical Research Fellow**

Graeme is a specialist physician, trained in respiratory medicine with research interests in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and rheumatic fever. He is experienced in health service provision, health-related research and health policy and protocol development in the north of Australia, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. His current research and health service development interests include chronic lung disease, rheumatic heart disease, remote specialist outreach, addressing tobacco for Indigenous Australians and primary healthcare-based rehabilitation. He joins the Institute from the Cairns Clinical School, where he was Associate Professor of Medicine in the School of Medicine and Dentistry at James Cook University.

**James Ward, Group Head, Preventative Health**

James is an Indigenous health researcher with more than 15 years experience working within Aboriginal health communities. He has a strong background in community-based research in urban, regional and rural Australia, with his interests including sexual and adolescent health. He also has extensive experience managing public health programs. James joins the Institute from the Kirby Institute at the University of New South Wales, where he was a Senior Lecturer and Program Head of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research Program.

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**Educational symposium on diabetes planned for Darwin**

In October, Baker IDI will hold its fourth health symposium called ‘Diabetes Care in the Top End and Centre’. The symposium will be held at the Holiday Inn Esplanade in Darwin on October 19 & 20. A full program will be posted closer to the time.

*For inquiries, call 1300 728 900.*

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**Other upcoming conferences that might be of interest**

- [Australian Diabetes Educators Association NT Biennial Conference](#) in Alice Springs on Friday, 27 April (Note: The program includes Baker IDI diabetes specialists A/Professors Jonathan Shaw and Neale Cohen)

- [Chronic Disease Network Conference 2012](#) “Promoting Healthy Childhood _ Preventing Chronic Conditions” in Darwin in September, 2012

- [The 6th Pacific Region Indigenous Doctors’ Congress (PRIDoC)](#) in Alice Springs from October 3-7, 2012
Indigenous health studies

Central Australian Heart Protection Study: Participant recruitment has begun, with the aim to recruit 360 people with Acute Coronary Syndrome for a randomised control study which will examine the use of nurse-led intervention compared to the usual care arm. The study will also examine the role of family, including the introduction of a buddy system, in an effort to improve the management of the cardiovascular health of participants. The study's geographic boundaries stretch from Indulkana and Pukatja in the south to Tennant Creek and Epenarra in the north. To assist with the scale and complexities of this project, a DVD has been produced in five local languages to bridge understanding and address issues of giving appropriate information and gaining informed consent. The study team is working closely with local health services and clinics to drive this project.

For more information, AliceCAHPS@bakeridi.edu.au

Kanyini Vascular Collaboration (KVC) Centre for Research Excellence: The KVC is a partnership between Baker IDI, The George Institute for Global Health and 10 Indigenous-controlled health services. In 2011, it was funded for four years to establish a Centre for Research Excellence through the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute. The focus is on chronic disease intervention in Indigenous primary health care, research capacity development and knowledge translation.

In late 2011, Baker IDI Central Australia hosted Indigenous researchers from Canada as part of a knowledge translation forum facilitated by Chief Investigators, Associate Professor Josée G. Lavoie and Samantha Togni. Josée, from the Health Sciences Program at the University of Northern British Columbia, shared experiences of her work exploring methods of changing the way Indigenous research is conducted and the need to engage in translational research, arguing that Indigenous voices are valuable but often undervalued at policy level. While Baker IDI Central Australia’s Research Co-ordinator, Samantha Togni presented on early thinking around an integrated knowledge translation and exchange plan for KVC, and more broadly, the application of knowledge translation in the NT. Click here to see their presentations.

For more information, contact Samantha.Togni@bakeridi.edu.au

Rheumatic Fever Follow Up Study (RhFFUS): This study aims to assist primary health providers and specialists to understand the significance of subtle changes on echocardiography and to determine whether these represent the earliest changes of Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) or mere variations of normal heart anatomy. This is particularly important in a setting where Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) and RHD remain among the highest in the world. The study will monitor the progress of children identified with minor heart abnormalities during an earlier study to see whether they are at greater risk of developing RHD and/or contracting ARF. This NHRMC-funded collaborative project will then be used to inform screening prevention and treatment guidelines.

Sharing Success: This project aims to identify and promote enablers and address potential uptake of secondary antibiotic prophylaxis by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with ARF and/or RHD living in northern and central Australia. An audit in 12 regional and remote communities showed that only one in five patients recommended for secondary prophylaxis were adequately protected against infection and the possibility of worsening heart valve damage.

For more information about the two studies above, contact Graeme.Maguire@bakeridi.edu.au
Diabetes in Pregnancy Study: Baker IDI is participating in the NT Diabetes in Pregnancy Partnership Project, which is a collaborative project between health service providers and researchers in the Northern Territory to investigate and improve the health of NT women with diabetes in pregnancy and their babies. This NHMRC-funded project focuses on translating evidence into practice through development of a clinical register and models of care for women with diabetes in pregnancy.

For more information, contact Alex.Brown@bakeridi.edu.au

Diabetes Education: Diabetes Nurse Educators from Baker IDI’s Central Australia office recently delivered a Certificate 3 course in diabetes education for remote area nurses, with plans in place to deliver a similar course to Aboriginal health workers later in the year.

For more information, contact Sharon.Johnson@bakeridi.edu.au

Links to reports, media or publications of interest

- New guidelines for treating chronic disease in General Practice have been released. Please click here.
- New guidelines for treating Acute Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease are due out shortly. You can subscribe to be notified as soon as they become available. For more, visit RDH Australia.
- The Indigenous health issue of MJA is due out in early July
- The national diabetes report released last month, Diabetes: The silent pandemic and its impact on Australia, shows Indigenous Australians are three times more likely to have type 2 diabetes, and are at a 10-fold higher risk of kidney failure and up to 8-fold higher risk of high blood pressure compared to non-Indigenous Australians.

We welcome your feedback on our Baker IDI Central Australia E-news Bulletin. Please contact Tracey Ellis on 03 8532 1514 or at tracey.ellis@bakeridi.edu.au