

PARTNERSHIP NEWS

Official Newsletter of the Rio Tinto Child Health Partnership

Delivering improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Maternal Health

December 2005

MESSAGE FROM THE PARTNERSHIP MANAGER

Welcome to the first edition of Partnership News, the official newsletter of the Rio Tinto Child Health Partnership.

New Team at the Institute

By now most of you will be aware that Samantha Faulkner has resigned as Partnership Manager to return to Queensland. Firstly, I would like to thank Samantha for her efforts at what was a critical stage in the development of the Rio Tinto Child Health Partnership.

Secondly, Samantha's resignation has been the catalyst for some restructuring within the Institute. This has resulted in responsibility for the Partnership moving into Kulunga Research Network.

This will give the Partnership more structure and support, as well as a more solid base from which to reach the Indigenous and research communities.

As Kulunga Manager, I have assumed the role of Partnership Manager, and lead a team comprising Rani Param as Coordinator of the Partnership, and Tracey-Lee Edwards as Communications Officer, with Ted Wilkes continuing as the Partnership Leader.

Partner Visits

Some of you have already met the new team when myself and Robyn Sermon from Rio Tinto visited our partners over the past two months. This was a great opportunity for me to meet everyone, and to touch base on some of the Partnership's recent achievements.

More on our visits is included on page 4.

Newsletter Name

Suggestions are welcome for an alternative, more creative name for our newsletter. Please forward any ideas to Tracey-Lee on email at traceyle@ichr.uwa.edu.au

Project Achievements

On page 2, we've provided a brief summary of where things are at with the three projects.

Project 1 has been an outstanding success, and is now poised to go national!

Project 2 on fetal alcohol syndrome prevention is well underway, with Queensland Health signing community agreements with all three sites.

Project 3 on workforce development is being led by Northern Territory, looking at brief interventions and community health.

More on this will be disseminated to our partners in the coming months.

Consolidation: The Way Forward

The next six to 12 months promise to be exciting times for the Partnership with many events on the horizon.

In May 2006, we will host a two day national symposium and showcase on promoting healthy pregnancy, providing linkage opportunities between community workers, policy makers and researchers. Page 2 has more information on this important event.

Partnership Leader Ted Wilkes and myself will take to the road to visit the jurisdictions, in particular the project sites. I will soon be in contact with our State Government partners to firm these up.

Until next time, I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Colleen Hayward
Partnership Manager



Colleen W

National Policy and Planning Information for Indigenous Child Health and Wellbeing

Project 1 of the Partnership was led by Western Australia, and aimed to ascertain the feasibility of modelling the Western Australian Aboriginal Child Health Survey in the Northern Territory and Queensland. Modelling results from the Australian Bureau of Statistics was so successful, that at a recent Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council meeting in Brisbane, it was agreed to roll the project out on a national basis. This is an excellent example of the influence and leveraging ability of the Partnership, and its unique capacity to fast-track outcomes from one jurisdiction into others.

Towards a National Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Prevention Strategy

Queensland Health is developing a train-the-trainer resource for community-based health promotion interventions in the Queensland trial sites for Projects 2 and 3. At the community and service delivery level, a need for a training resource for Indigenous health workers and other team members working with communities has been identified. The development of the train-the-trainer resource has been shaped by input for the Queensland trial sites and a review of the literature. It looks at protective and risk factors for healthy pregnancy and existing service delivery interventions that reduce risks and promote the protective factors. It will be distributed to the jurisdictional partners to adapt for their sites when available.

National Indigenous Community Workforce Strategy

Project 3 of the Partnership is to develop workforce strategies for Indigenous maternal and child health. This project is being led by the Northern Territory Department of Health and Community Services, who have made substantial progress already.

The project has kicked off in the West Arnhem region at Jabiru, where a collaboration with the University of Newcastle is trialling the delivery of brief intervention counselling with pregnant women via community health nurses. It is anticipated the trial will extend to the Barkly region if successful.

Other work in the Northern Territory includes the implementation of multidisciplinary hospital teams that work in partnership with divisions of general practice. These teams include Aboriginal health workers, and are a similar model to the 'bundles of care' teams developed by the Commonwealth Government. The Northern Territory is also considering undertaking economic modelling of workforce ratios, which is anticipated would provide a useful indication of appropriate staffing levels and mix for the delivery of health care to Indigenous Australians.

Many of the policy level approaches in the Northern Territory align with those being progressed in Queensland, Western Australia and nationally.

The three states maintain regular communication to align, inform and support jurisdictional and local community level implementation.

National Symposium on Healthy Pregnancies

On the 9th and 10th of May 2006, the Partnership will host a national symposium on promoting healthy pregnancy. This will be a significant event that showcases successful community-based programs that are making a difference to individuals and communities. The symposium aims to link up people on the ground with those in research and policy development, and to promote synergies between research, policy and practice. The Partnership has already had wins on the national front with Project 1, and is optimistic that similar leverage can be achieved for this project.

More on the symposium will be distributed soon, including a program, and details for attendance.



Study shows that health professionals want more information on FAS

A unique study suggests that most health professionals counselling pregnant women do not routinely ask about alcohol consumption or provide information on the consequences of alcohol use in pregnancy. This was of concern as many alcohol-related birth defects may be prevented by appropriate counselling and advice.

The study was funded by the WA Health Promotion Foundation (Healthway) and was undertaken by the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research. It surveyed 1,143 health professionals in Western Australia on their knowledge, practice and opinions about FAS and alcohol consumption in pregnancy. The study has been reported in the latest Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health.

Principal author and Institute researcher Jan Payne said "Most of the health professionals we surveyed (89 per cent) currently caring for pregnant women advised their clients to consider not drinking at all during their pregnancy. This is good news, as this advice is consistent with NHMRC guidelines for alcohol consumption in pregnancy; however, only 12 per cent provided advice involving all aspects of the NHMRC guidelines.

Ms Payne further advised the majority of health professionals wanted more educational resources to help them better diagnose FAS. The survey results are important because they provide a starting point for improving knowledge amongst health professionals. A new project commencing in January 2006 will help to do this by developing and evaluating health promotion material for health professionals about alcohol use in pregnancy and its effects on the unborn child. This is an area that may be of particular interest to the partnership's state partners.

More information about the study can be obtained from Ms Jan Payne at janp@ichr.uwa.edu.au.

Partnership contributes to health workforce study

The Productivity Commission recently conducted a study into Australia's Health Workforce with the aim of identifying options for the continued delivery of quality care into the next decade. Submissions were invited earlier this year, with a position paper produced for further comment in September. Comments on the position paper were due to be received by the Commission in early November.

With the development of an Indigenous maternal and child health workforce strategy a key project outcome of the RTCHP, a submission was made by the Institute on behalf of the Partnership. This submission emphasised the importance of the early years to long term improvements in Indigenous health, and highlighted several known and successful workforce strategies in an Indigenous context, identified in its literature review Workforce Development for Indigenous Maternal and Child Health.

Partnership Coordinator Rani Param said it was important to engage in these national reviews, as a key outcome of the Partnership is the fast-tracking of interventions into other jurisdictions. "The Partnership is all about learnings and sharing these learnings to benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia. For this reason it is important we engage as much as possible in broader activities such as this health workforce study," she said.

More information about Australia's Health Workforce can be found at <http://www.pc.gov.au/study/healthworkforce/index.html>



Visits With Our Partners

In October, Colleen Hayward, Lyn Nixon and Rani Param from the Institute, together with Robyn Sermon from Rio Tinto Ltd, visited our partners to present some of the Partnership's recent achievements, but importantly to introduce the new team and catch up.

The team met with the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation, Rio Tinto partners in Canberra and Queensland, Queensland Health, and the WA Department of Premier and Cabinet. We are still to get to Darwin to visit our Northern Territory partners, and we are hopeful this will happen in February.



Left to right: Shaun Edwards, Gerry Cleary and Madonna Cuthbert from Queensland Health



Left to right: Nicole Ireland (Rio Tinto Coal), Genevieve Fraser (Comalco), Colleen Hayward and Rani Param

For your Diary

- 15th March 2006 - Progress Reports due
- 7th April 2006 - Newsletter 1 due for distribution
- 9th to 10th May 2006 - National Symposium
- 11th May 2006 - NAC Meeting
- 7th July 2006 - Newsletter 2 due for distribution
- 15th August 2006 - Progress Reports due
- 3rd October 2006 - NAC Meeting
- 6th October 2006 - Newsletter 3 due for distribution
- 8th December 2006 - Newsletter 4 due for distribution

NOTE: All content for newsletters must be submitted at least 4 weeks prior to the distribution

Meet the new Team

The Institute has appointed a new all-Indigenous team to manage the Partnership.

Team members are:



Ted Wilkes
Partnership Leader



Rani Param
Partnership Coordinator



Tracey-Lee Edwards
Communications Officer

The Rio Tinto Child Health Partnership is proudly supported by:



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