

Media Release

Wheatbelt
GP Network



Building healthy communities through General Practice.

17 May 2010

Aboriginal Health – Have you had your Annual Health Check?

In November 2008 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a \$1.6 billion National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes. As part of this investment the Australian Government plan to support a number of measures specifically directed at supporting greater Aboriginal access to mainstream primary health care services and more effective chronic disease management for Indigenous patients through mainstream general practice.

Chronic disease remains significant problem for Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders. "Aboriginal people experience the burden of chronic disease by two and half times that of other Australians", said Dr Duncan Steed, CEO Wheatbelt GP Network. "Chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, chronic respiratory disease and chronic kidney disease are a major problem and can all be reduced through early identification and management of the risk factors and disease itself", Dr Steed advises.

Incentives have been provided through the Practice Incentives Program to encourage General Practice to improve the coordination of health care for Aboriginal patients within General Practice. Included in this is greater support for Aboriginal patients to actively participate in their own health care, in addition to improved access to affordable medicines and multidisciplinary and specialist follow-up care for those with chronic disease.

"Annual Health Assessments are the best way for Aboriginal patients to gain an overall picture of their health and make the first step to improved health", Dr Steed advises, "By identifying common chronic disease risk factors through health assessments, GPs and the patient can work together to modify behaviour and decrease risk factors, delaying the onset of chronic disease or improving outcomes for those who are already unwell".

General Practices throughout the Wheatbelt will be working with Aboriginal patients in the coming months to improve their access to health care and assist in improving their overall well being.

For more information regarding Aboriginal health services please contact your local GP.

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For media inquiries please phone Trisha Ellis on (08) 9621 1530 or email memberservices@wheatbelt.com.au.



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