



<b>IN THIS ISSUE...</b>	
<b>HATS OFF TO THE NSW NETWORK</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>RESEARCH</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>CAMPAIGNS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>RESOURCES</b>	
<b>SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>EDUCATION &amp; TRAINING</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>WORKSHOPS &amp; CONFERENCES 2011</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>GENERAL PRACTICE NSW CONTACTS</b>	<b>10</b>

## HATS OFF TO THE NSW NETWORK

### NSW GPs rank highly with patients

NSW GPs are at the top of the performance ladder when it comes to blood pressure and cholesterol monitoring, a report from the Bureau of Health Information shows.

The Bureau's first annual performance report, *Healthcare in Focus: how NSW compares internationally*, compared NSW to the rest of Australia and 10 other countries.

It showed that in 2010, 88% of adults reported having their blood pressure checked in the previous year. And 80% said their cholesterol had been checked during the same period – the highest proportion reported internationally.

Over the past decade, ischaemic heart disease deaths in NSW dropped 47% and stroke deaths showed a marked decrease of 37%, the report said.

It also found the state's GPs rank highly with their patients. Seventy eight per cent said their GP always knew important information about their medical history, 74% said the GP always spent enough time with them and 77% said they were always involved as much as they wanted to be in their medical care.

"The report shows NSW does well on the international stage but should seize opportunities to improve healthcare," Bureau chief executive Dr Diane Watson said.

"Management of chronic disease, reducing unnecessary hospital use and better flow of patient information are all areas where improvements could have a significant impact."

Using data mainly from the Commonwealth Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Healthcare in Focus* employed almost 90 measures of performance to track care across NSW.

It found some important barriers to healthcare, with 14% reporting a medical problem in the past year but not seeing a doctor because of cost.

After-hours access was also an issue, with less than half (37%) of adults saying they were easily able to get medical care after hours without visiting an emergency department. A sizeable minority of patients (32%) reported gaps in the flow of information from hospital emergency departments to their regular GP.

The report also found that rates of diabetes-related lower limb amputations were higher in NSW than the rest of Australia and all other countries surveyed except the United States.

The Bureau's latest Hospital Quarterly performance report was released in February. It showed the traditional Christmas rush in NSW public hospital emergency departments was intense last year, with the number of patients seen eclipsing those treated at the height of the 2009 swine flu pandemic. Despite increased patient numbers, the state's emergency departments generally held their performance.



The Bureau is an independent, board-governed statutory health corporation established in response to the Garling Special Commission of Inquiry into Acute Care Services in NSW Public Hospitals.

Both reports can be downloaded from the Bureau's website [www.bhi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bhi.nsw.gov.au)

## **Congratulations to Indigenous Health Awards Finalists!**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Excellence in Indigenous Health Awards, held on 29 March 2011 in Darwin, recognises the inspirational work from service providers, communities and individuals who are making a difference in health disadvantage. Award Categories include outstanding delivery in child & maternal health, environmental health initiatives, and improving access to primary health care. This year, Central Coast Division of General Practice and NSW Outback Division of General Practice have been named as finalists for the awards!

Central Coast Division's work in chronic disease management is being acknowledged for improving access to primary care and NSW Outback Division's ATSI in General Practice (GP) strategy is being recognised for excellence in the category of environmental health.

We wish Central Coast Division and NSW Outback Division the best of luck for the Awards night on the 29 March!

For more information, see: <http://www.indigenoushealthawards.com/>

## **RESEARCH**

### **Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports**

#### ***Public and private sector medical indemnity claims in Australia 2007-08***

This report presents data for public and private sector medical indemnity claims, collected through the Medical Indemnity National Collection (MINC), for the period from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008 and is the first report in its series to publish claim numbers. The information presented includes the circumstances giving rise to claims, the age and sex of the subjects of the claims, the alleged physical and mental effects on claim subjects, the specialties of clinicians involved, the size and finalisation mode of claims and the length of time that claims were open.

Click on the link to view the [media release](#) and [report](#).

#### ***Australia's public sector medical indemnity claims 2007-08***

Australia's public sector medical indemnity claims 2007-08 reports data on the number, nature, incidence and costs of medical indemnity claims in the public sector during the financial year from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008. Data are also presented on claims closed during the five year period between 2003-04 and 2007-08, and on new claims with a reserve set against them in each of these years. This report describes the allegations of harm that gave rise to claims, the alleged physical and mental effects on claim subjects, the specialties of clinicians involved, and the size, duration and outcomes of the medical indemnity claims.

Click on the link to view the [media release](#) and [report](#).

### **Four in five Australians agree: people with dementia don't receive adequate care within the community**

New research released today reveals more than four in five (83%) Australians over 50 are concerned that community services alone cannot meet the needs of people with dementia. The survey of 1,200 Australians over



50, commissioned by Bupa Care Services, found that nearly nine in ten Australians (88%) recognise that people with dementia can often be a real burden on their families, with eight in ten (78%) believing that the impact of dementia is actually worse for the family than it is for the sufferer.

<http://www.bupa.com.au/Bupa/aged-care/news/dementiaresearch>

## CAMPAIGNS

### 'Swap it Don't Stop it'

The Australian Government has launched its 'Swap it don't stop it' campaign – a call to make easy, small, healthier lifestyle choices to reduce the risk of illness and disease. 'Swap it don't stop it' features Eric, an animated blue balloon character, likeable but overweight. On television, in print and on the radio, Eric will urge Australians to make some simple lifestyle changes to become healthier – for example, to swap big for small (portion control); swap often for sometimes (occasional treats); swap fried for fresh (nutritional quality); swap sitting for moving (physical activity); and swap watching for playing (physical activity). The campaign has a practical focus and encourages people to make practical choices in their everyday lives to improve their health.

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr11-nr-nr042.htm>

### Heart week

Sunday 1 May to Saturday 7 May is Heart Week. The Heart Foundation will be raising awareness of heart disease as the number one killer of Australian women. They need help during Heart Week to spread this message and help women reduce their risk factors for heart disease – register now for a *Heart Week kit*. *Heart Week kits* (posters, brochures and balloons) can be used to hold an event or set up a display in your workplace and help raise awareness – register on [www.heartfoundation.org.au/heartweek](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/heartweek) or by calling the Health Information Service on **1300 36 27 87**.

## RESOURCES

### Consumer Organisation for NSW

#### Welcome Health Consumers NSW (HCNSW)

Health Consumers NSW (HCNSW) is the new, independent peak health consumer organisation which provides the voice of health consumers in shaping policy and services in our state.

NSW will now be able to take its place among the state peak organisations to contribute the views of its health consumers.

HCNSW will soon be able to provide trained and informed consumer representatives through its **Consumer Representative Program** – people who are able to convey the 'broader health consumer perspective'.

**Membership now open.** Become a Voting or Associate member now. Contact the HCNSW Project Coordinator, Gina Ingrouille at: Mail: PO Box 6042, North Ryde, NSW 2113; Tel:02 8875 4622; Email: [secretariat@hcnsw.org.au](mailto:secretariat@hcnsw.org.au).



## New website to encourage older people to stay active and healthy

NSW Health have a new website that will enable older people and health professionals to access physical activity services that will help prevent injury and chronic disease. By simply entering a suburb, the Active and Healthy website [www.activeandhealthy.nsw.gov.au](http://www.activeandhealthy.nsw.gov.au) easily identifies a list of exercise programs by local providers. These programs focus on improving balance and strength, such as tai chi, yoga, strengthening programs and other specific classes designed for older people.

NSW Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant said the website allows older people to conveniently access exercise programs in their local community that promote a healthy lifestyle.

To complement the website, NSW Health has released *Staying Active and on Your Feet*, a new 20-page booklet full of useful information for older people to staying active and healthy to prevent a fall. “*Staying Active and on Your Feet* includes everything from tips on ways to fall-proof yourself, advice on healthy eating, health and lifestyle and home safety checklists,” Dr Chant said.

GPs and Practice Nurses can order their free copies of *Staying Active and on Your Feet* for their patients by contacting the Resource Distribution unit at Gladesville Hospital on ph: 9879 0443 or email: [tobinfo@doh.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:tobinfo@doh.health.nsw.gov.au)

See: [www.activeandhealthy.nsw.gov.au](http://www.activeandhealthy.nsw.gov.au)

## Stroke-Related Depression

Stroke survivors need significant medical and physical support before they can return to their daily life – but psychological assessment and support is often overlooked. The National Stroke Foundation, with support from *beyondblue*, the national depression initiative, is providing a unique resource to improve the treatment of depression after stroke.

Relationships Australia counsellors in Tasmania and NSW have been trained by National Stroke Foundation staff to better understand stroke and the risks of depression in people affected by stroke – survivors, families and carers. This program means that more people will have access to the specialised care they may need for this little-understood complication of stroke. The training program is supported by a new DVD, produced with funding by *beyondblue*, which also highlights the risk and the symptoms of depression after stroke. The DVD shows a group of stroke survivors, their families and their carers speak candidly about their emotional climb back to health.

Relationships Australia is the first organisation to take advantage of this training and can now offer access to trained counsellors across Tasmania and in five regions in NSW. It is hoped the program can be rolled-out nationally from 2011. For more information contact National Stroke Foundation PR & Media Coordinator Ebru Yaman: 03) 9670 1000 or 0488 380 484.

[www.strokefoundation.com.au](http://www.strokefoundation.com.au)

## Better Help for Health Professionals Means Better Help for Treating Mental Health Problems

Health professionals will have access to new clinical practice guidelines to help them identify and treat mental health problems following National Health and Medical Research Council’s approval of guidelines developed by *beyondblue*: the national depression initiative.

To view the full media release, select the link below:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr11-mb-mb030.htm>



## Providing support to new mums with a mental illness

A new study by national mental health charity SANE Australia reveals an alarming lack of support for mothers with a mental illness, during their pregnancy and after giving birth. The study found that almost 3 in every 4 expectant mothers were offered no support or information on how to plan for the stresses pregnancy and parenthood could place on their mental health. This was despite the fact the majority of respondents reported having a mental illness such as depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia before becoming pregnant. The study also found that more than half of the respondents received inconsistent and even conflicting information and advice regarding breastfeeding and medication. Barbara Hocking, the Executive Director of SANE Australia said this is not only confusing and worrying for mums themselves, but it is also potentially dangerous.

“New parents managing a mental illness often need additional information and support from health professionals – be they doctors, mental health or maternal and child health care professionals.”

*SANE Australia’s Research Bulletin 13 – Parenting and mental illness: the early years* found that practical help for this group of new parents, such as extra home visits or child care, was not offered to the vast majority of respondents. In addition, one in every two people surveyed feared losing custody and one in five actively considered relinquishing their baby.

“It’s critical that new parents are told about, and where appropriate, referred to, any additional support services that are available,” said Ms Hocking. “Parents need encouragement to prepare a contingency plan in the event that the mother becomes unwell in the future.”

According to Professor Fiona Judd, Director of the Centre for Women’s Mental Health at Melbourne’s Royal Women’s Hospital, health professionals need to work together much more closely, so services are coordinated and information provided is consistent, as this is an especially vulnerable time.

***SANE Australia has developed a range of fact sheets, DVDs and booklets which explain symptoms and treatments for mental illness and related topics. Visit SANE Australia at [www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org) for more information.***

## SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

### Contact tracing letters for Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia now available on GP NSW Website

GP NSW, in collaboration with the STIPU unit, are now able to provide Contact Tracing letters for Gonorrhoea and Chlamydia in a template format that can be uploaded into Medical Director and/or Best Practice.

To access these templates visit: <http://gpnsw.com.au/programs/sexually-transmitted-infections-sti/contact-tracing>

For further information regarding the GP NSW STI Project contact Liz Meadley [lizmeadley@gpnsw.com.au](mailto:lizmeadley@gpnsw.com.au)



## EDUCATION & TRAINING

### Opioid Treatment Accreditation Course

The Opioid Treatment Accreditation Course is an initiative of NSW Health to equip medical practitioners with the skills required to successfully treat opioid dependent patients. It can be completed as a one day face-to-face workshop or as a series of online modules, followed by a half-day clinical placement.

As of 2011 the Opioid Treatment Accreditation Course has been redesigned to address new trends in treatment of opioid dependent patients. The revised course focuses strongly on managing and preventing problematic pharmaceutical opioid use, especially in relation to pain management, while still providing participants with the vital skills to become accredited to prescribe Methadone and Buprenorphine.

Contact: Rob Sutherland, Opioid Treatment Program & Clinical Policy  
Tel: (02) 9391 9255 Email: [rsuth@doh.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:rsuth@doh.health.nsw.gov.au)

### Diabetes Management: a 'Journey for Control'

*Baker IDI and MSD release the latest innovation in diabetes education*

Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute (Baker IDI) and MSD today officially announced the launch of a new online tool to help improve diabetes education and management in Australia. The online tool, called *Journey for Control*, has been designed to provide diabetes educators, practice nurses and other healthcare professionals with information and resources to help patients better understand their diabetes and achieve better control of their condition. The tool was funded by MSD and adds to its existing diabetes resources for healthcare professionals and patients. Baker IDI developed the scripts for the "Diabetes Explained" modules.

In 2003 diabetes was estimated to cost Australia over \$6 billion each year. It is Australia's fastest growing chronic disease, affecting well over one million Australians, a prevalence that has doubled since 1981 – with estimates showing that the problem will continue to grow over the coming decades.

To access *Journey for Control*, users simply need to register and sign in at [www.msdsjourneyforcontrol.com.au](http://www.msdsjourneyforcontrol.com.au). Information and resources available are tailored for both healthcare professionals and patients. The tool provides patient-friendly information that can be used to facilitate one-on-one discussions between a healthcare professional and their patient, or used in group diabetes education.

To access the new online diabetes education tool, *Journey for Control*, or for further information, please visit [www.msdsjourneyforcontrol.com.au](http://www.msdsjourneyforcontrol.com.au).

## Health professional VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

### CanTeen needs Volunteers

CanTeen the Australian Organisation for Young People Living with Cancer, aged 12–24, are currently in need of the following Program Volunteers;

#### Medical Volunteers

CanTeen needs registered nurses and/or doctors to attend our Programs and Recreation Days. Our Medical Volunteers are there to provide medical support to our Members, whilst participating in all our group activities, and importantly, having fun!

#### Psychosocial Volunteers



CanTeen facilitates group discussion and educational sessions with psychosocial content for our Members. These require psychologists, social workers and youth workers to assist in the delivery of these sessions.

### **How to Join**

Becoming a CanTeen Volunteer is easy! Simply contact your local CanTeen office:

CanTeen Hunter & Northern NSW Division

Phone: (02) 4940 0330

Email: [hunter@canteen.org.au](mailto:hunter@canteen.org.au)

Or visit the website [www.canteen.org.au](http://www.canteen.org.au).



## WORKSHOPS & CONFERENCES 2011

March	
24	<p><b>National Close the Gap Day 2011</b> OXFAM</p> <p>For more information: <a href="http://www.oxfam.org.au/act/events/close-the-gap-day/">http://www.oxfam.org.au/act/events/close-the-gap-day/</a></p>
25 – 27	<p><b>NSW RDN / RDA (NSW) 2011 Summer Refresher Conference</b> Novotel Pacific Bay Resort, Coffs Harbour</p> <p>To register for the conference download the program from the <a href="#">NSW RDN website</a> under 'Conferences/CPD Events'.</p> <p>For more information contact the NSW Rural Doctors Network on 02 8337 8100 or <a href="mailto:conferences@nswrdn.com.au">conferences@nswrdn.com.au</a>.</p>
April	
4 – 6	<p><b>Communicable Disease Control Conference 2011</b> Public Health Association of Australia Inc. (PHAA) Location: Hotel Realm, Canberra <a href="#">Registration form</a></p> <p>Sponsorship and Exhibition packages available upon requests. Please contact Janine Turnbull, <a href="mailto:marketing@phaa.net.au">marketing@phaa.net.au</a> or 02 62852373.</p>
7	<p><b>GP NSW eHealth Forum</b> GP NSW Location: Grace Hotel, Sydney</p> <p>You are invited to the GPNSW eHealth Forum - Thursday 7 April 2011 at the Grace Hotel, Sydney.</p> <p>Please click <a href="#">here</a> for the agenda, information sheet and online registration link. Please note the website will be updated regularly as information about the forum becomes available.</p> <p>For further information, please contact Jacqueline Owens at <a href="mailto:jacquelineowens@gpnsw.com.au">jacquelineowens@gpnsw.com.au</a>.</p>
7 – 9	<p><b>APNA National Conference 2011 - Roadmap for the Future – Great Expectations</b> APNA Location: Hilton Hotel Sydney – 488 George Street, Sydney, NSW 2000</p> <p>After the outstanding success of its first two conferences (<i>The Right Stuff</i> and <i>Golden Opportunities</i>), APNA will be holding a third, inspiring conference in 2011. The conference, 'Roadmap for the Future - Great Expectations' will feature renowned keynote speakers, interactive master classes, extensive opportunities to network with practice nurses from around Australia, and much more. Registrations are now open for the conference.</p> <p>For more information, and to view the full program and submit a registration, please visit <a href="http://www.apna.asn.au/conference">www.apna.asn.au/conference</a>.</p> <p>If you have any queries please contact the conference organisers Baldwin Consulting Group on (03) 9645 9858 or <a href="mailto:liz@baldwinconsulting.com.au">liz@baldwinconsulting.com.au</a>.</p>



<b>May</b>	
<b>5 – 6</b>	<p><b>Aboriginal Health Research Conference-‘Research for a better Future’</b></p> <p>This conference will showcase Aboriginal Health Research and promote community, research and policy engagement and exchange in Aboriginal health, to allow communities to describe their health and research priorities and to provide opportunities for sharing information and establishing collaborations among Aboriginal community members, researchers and policy makers. The conference will be held on 5 - 6 May 2011 in Sydney.</p> <p>Further information contact Julie McGraw <a href="mailto:jmcgraw@gemspl.com.au">jmcgraw@gemspl.com.au</a>.</p>
<b>July</b>	
<b>3 – 10</b>	<p><b>Naidoc Week 2011 - Change: the Next Step is Ours</b></p> <p>For entry forms and information on NAIDOC Week, visit <a href="http://www.naidoc.org.au/">http://www.naidoc.org.au/</a>.</p>
<b>August</b>	
<b>20</b>	<p><b>Choose to be Challenged - Conference</b></p> <p>Family Planning NSW Venue: Aerial UTS Function Centre, Level 7, Building 10, 235 Jones Street, Ultimo</p> <p>Informative, relevant clinical and research updates in reproductive and sexual health which includes panel discussions, speakers and workshops!</p> <p>Key Note speakers include: Dr Phillip Goldstone - Marie Stopes International, Dr Deborah Bateson -Family Planning NSW, Dr Karen Canfell-NSW Cancer Council, Ms Sherin Jarvis-Royal Hospital for Women and Professor Basil Donovan –National Centre in HIV Epidemiology &amp; Clinical Research.</p> <p>Cost \$195 Early Bird Special \$175 (prior to 17 June 2011)</p> <p>For information on speakers and registration visit: <a href="http://www.fpnsw.org.au/choosetobechallenged2011">www.fpnsw.org.au/choosetobechallenged2011</a></p> <p>Category 2 points in the RACGP and QI&amp;CPD Program for the 2011-2013 Triennium have been applied for.</p>
<b>Nov</b>	
<b>9 – 11</b>	<p><b>Youth Health 2011: It’s totally important! – 8<sup>th</sup> Australian &amp; New Zealand Adolescent Health Conference</b></p> <p>Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour, NSW.</p> <p>To submit an abstract for the conference, please visit <a href="http://www.youthhealth2011.com.au">www.youthhealth2011.com.au</a> and click on the Call for Abstracts section. Abstracts will be accepted for oral and poster presentations and for workshops.</p> <p>The closing date for submissions is Monday, 20 June 2011.</p>
<b>25 – 27</b>	<p><b>NSW RDN /RDA (NSW) Rural GPs Conference</b></p> <p>CPD Weekend Location: TBC</p> <p>For further information, contact Arna Wotherspoon - Phone: 02 8337 8100, Fax: 02 8337 8110, Email: <a href="mailto:conferences@nswrdn.com.au">conferences@nswrdn.com.au</a>.</p>



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(In program alphabetical order)

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Phone: 02 9239 2900.

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