Welcome to the fifth edition of the COAG Aboriginal Child Health Project Newsletter.

The first six months of 2013 have been very productive for the project. We had the opportunity to give two conference presentations and present to the Great Southern Regional Aboriginal Health Planning Forum.

There have been a range of training requests, one regional and one remote Aboriginal Child Health Upskilling Course have been planned and implemented. Significant momentum in the Aboriginal Child Health sector is certainly noticeable in WA. Whilst this newsletter depicts a snapshot of some great work, there is so much more happening across the state.

This Newsletter is designed to provide our readership across Western Australia with an update on the progress of the Project and information relevant to Aboriginal child health. We hope you find the content interesting and welcome your feedback.

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Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health Conference

The second Aboriginal Maternal and Child Health conference was held in Perth at the Duxton Hotel on the 29th and 30th of May. The event was sponsored by the Aboriginal Maternity Services Support Unit in collaboration with Child and Adolescent Community Health Aboriginal Child Health Project. 230 delegates attended from around the state. Marie Taylor, a respected Noongar elder opened the conference with a warm and sincere welcome.

The theme was “Working together to close the gap – building on success for the future”, and the focus was on evaluation and outcomes. The keynote speakers provided insight into the importance of participating in evaluation at all levels of service delivery. Concurrent sessions gave presenters opportunities to showcase their programs; share lessons learnt and celebrate success.

An outstanding closing performance was given by Clifton Jungurrayi Bieundurry.

Feedback from delegates included:
- “The conference strengths were recognising the absolute importance of collaboration, partnerships and relationships.”
- “Offers a positive view of agencies and service providers recognising the need to evaluate and improve service.”

Conference information and photographs are available on the AMSSU website: http://kemh.health.wa.gov.au/services/amssu/events.htm
Ear health promotion in the Goldfields

Paula Wynne is the newly appointed Chronic Disease Nurse and Health Promotion Officer at Goldfields Local Medicare Midwest. Paula has been working with the children at Meekaway Kindy in Geraldton in her role with the otitis media project. Over two morning sessions, she delivered fun health education sessions on hand hygiene and ear health to 28 children.

They received show bags, which contained leaflets and information for parents and carers on ear disease, tissues, soap, stickers, a balloon and an ear health activity colouring book.

The children enjoyed exercises, stories, crunching health fruit and vegetables, and washing their hands correctly with magic fairy soap. The sessions were considered a success, and were positively evaluated by school staff.

Nurturing Perinatal Mental Health

Introduction to Aboriginal Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Training

WA Mental Health Commission has provided further funding to provide this important mental health training in a number of locations across Western Australia. The training workshops incorporate local culture, traditions and beliefs, and use local resources and expertise to:

- Promote cultural awareness;
- Explore the ongoing effects of inter-generational trauma;
- Work from a strengths-based perspective;
- Improve awareness of parent-infant attachment in an Aboriginal context; and
- Enhance collaboration and knowledge of local services.

To secure your place or to find out more contact Louise Brooks on 08 6103 5595 or email Louise.Brooks@sjog.org.au

Remote training in Warakurna

At the request of Ngaanyatjarra Health Service, an Aboriginal Child Health Upskilling course was held at Warakurna Learning centre. 17 participants and 7 facilitators travelled to meet in the central desert community for three days of learning.

For the course facilitators, Leonie Hellwig and Ros Norris, it was a unique opportunity to deliver training in a very remote setting. The course was supported by Ngaanyatjarra Health Service staff as well as visiting Paediatricians Professor Karen Edmond and Dr David
Baldwin, the PMH visiting ophthalmology team and Kylie Hart from Ngunytji Tjitji Pirni Health. Local facilitators Davina Prasad Hannah Stanley, Janet Jennings, Anne Shinkfield, Beryl Jennings and Joy Tate rounded out the program.

Comments from the participants included:
- Grateful to have participated in doing this course.
- Have learnt so much and really really glad about this course.
- it was excellent and well paced

Participants in Warakurna Upskilling course

Healthy Child Development and milestones

No matter what country or culture children grow up in, they all develop skills in a predictable sequence, with some variation in timing. For example, infants learn to control their arms before their legs, and usually crawl before they walk. The purpose of assessing child development is to identify children’s struggles early and offer additional support. The value in assessing a child’s development over a number of visits is to allow the health professional to build a complete picture of the child. This also allows an opportunity for health staff to provide parents and carers with information about normal development, what is expected next in a child’s development and offer preventative /early intervention strategies as needed.

The attainment of certain skills and abilities are considered to be milestones in a child’s development, and there is a range of time in which the skill is expected to be mastered. Walking, for example, can occur any time between 8 and 18 months, but a child who is not walking by 18 months requires referral and follow-up.

There are a number of excellent resource available describing normal development, milestones and indications for referral.

Mary Sheridan’s seminal text, “From Birth to Five Years. Children’s Development Progress” describes normal development in detail and is an invaluable reference. Information on purchasing the book is available via the Enhanced Aboriginal Child Health Schedule Resources Matrix link below.

For a quick reference guide, the “Red flag intervention guide for children 0-5” resource is recommended. This can be downloaded free of charge via the Resources Matrix at:


Resources
A focus on: Nutrition and physical activity

The Department of Health and Aging has produced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific resources to support early childhood workers, parents and carers. The resources are designed to promote key massages about healthy eating and physical activity, necessary for healthy child development.


The resources can be viewed and ordered via:


NATSI Children’s Day

The 4th of August is National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Day. The day was first observed by the Secretariat of Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) in 1988.

The aim of the day is to enhance family relationships which can lead to positive consequences for the wellbeing, self-esteem, sense of belonging and resilience of Indigenous children. The importance of culture for young children is emphasised in the celebrations.

There is a theme every year, focussing on an aspect of the lives Aboriginal children. The theme for this year is “Right Here, Right Now, Our Rights Matter” and the focus is on raising awareness of and promoting the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children, specifically:

- The major human rights concerns that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children still uniquely and disproportionately experience around the country; and
- Special rights that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have as the Indigenous children of this country

For more ideas about promoting children’s rights, information and resources, visit the SNAICC website http://www.snaicc.org.au

Watch a webinar about…

The impact of domestic violence on children: an overview of the key new ideas and evidence

Have you ever tried a Webinar? This is a presentation you watch and listen to online. All you need is an internet connection and some headphones or speakers. A new education series is being offered by the Clearinghouse on Domestic Violence. As a topical issue when working with Aboriginal (and other) families, this webinar summarises some of the key evidence that has emerged from research in developmental psychology and neuroscience. It provides a layperson’s perspective and overview of how this research impacts on how we understand, work with, and make decisions about, children who live with domestic violence.

View the presentation slides here
Download the reading list

Upcoming events & education in 2013

Tracks to Two-Way Learning
Institute for Professional Learning, Perth
15th & 16th August
Register online at www.det.wa.edu.au/professionallearning or phone: 1300610 801

Aboriginal Child Health Upskilling Course
Marr Mooditj, Perth
2nd – 6th September
To register your interest click here or for more information contact Anne Wilson 9224 3732 or anne.wilson@health.wa.gov.au

CRANA Conference
Darwin
25th -28th Sept

Kimberley Maternal and Child Health Conference – (Kimberley region only)
Kununurra
16th – 17th October
Contact Melissa Williams, Maternal & Child Health Coordinator on 9194 1641 or Melissa.williams@health.wa.gov.au

Aboriginal Maternal and Newborn Health Learning Package
Perth
21st – 25th October
Contact Lli Chapman to register or enquire further on 9340 2823 or email lliinos.chapman@health.wa.gov.au

Aboriginal Health Worker Ear Health Training
Perth (and Regional)
John Smoker, AHW Upskilling Project Manager, john.smoker@health.wa.gov.au or 9222 0289