

The Indigenous Oral Health Unit



Newsletter, April 2012

LAUNCH OF THE IOHU

The Indigenous Oral Health Unit was launched on December 16, 2011, as part of the University of Adelaide's Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health.

Aunty Josie Agius gave the welcome to country, and this was followed by speeches from Professor Justin Beilby (Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences), Professor Kaye Roberts-Thomson (Director, ARCPOH), Dr Katherine O'Donoghue (Chair, Indigenous Dentists' Association of Australia) and Associate Professor Lisa Jamieson, the IOHU Director.

Under the banner of the Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health ([ARCPOH](#)), researchers have been working for years in the area of Indigenous oral health, with an impressive record of publications, conference presentations, and NHMRC-funded research projects. Unfortunately while the Close the Gap campaign has brought increased visibility to the issue of Indigenous health in Australia, oral health is an area that is often forgotten. One of the goals of the new unit is to bring attention to this issue, work on advocacy and cultural awareness, and facilitate access to information. The IOHU also hopes to encourage more Indigenous people to study oral health courses, and will be collaborating with other University



Jenny Baker (Yaitya Purruna Indigenous Health Unit), Cathy Leane (Women's and Children's Health Network), and IOHU Director Lisa Jamieson

departments to achieve this.

In attendance at the opening were representatives from the Faculty of Health Sciences, the South Australian Dental Service, Yaitya Purrana Indigenous Health Unit, the Indigenous Dentists' Association, Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia, Colgate, the Women's and Children's Health Network, and Wilto Yerlo (which recruits and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the University).

The first Advisory Committee meeting was held immediately after the opening – the Committee comprises members of many of the aforementioned groups as well as Australian Indigenous Health InfoNet, the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH), and Menzies School of Health Research.

Further information about the unit is available from the IOHU website:

<http://www.arcpoh.adelaide.edu.au/iohu/>



Susan Cartwright (Colgate), Kaye Roberts-Thomson (ARCPOH), Chris Morris (South Australian Dental Service) and Sandra Meihubers (Independent Dental Health Consultant)



David Scrimgeour (Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia), Colin Endean (Rural Indigenous Dentist Consortium) and John Spencer (ARCPOH)

INDIGENOUS ORAL HEALTH CONFERENCE, 13-14 September 2012 in Adelaide

The Indigenous Oral Health Unit is convening a conference to take place in September in Adelaide. This will be the first opportunity since 2002 for health professionals, community representatives, service providers and policy makers to discuss Indigenous oral health issues. Topics for discussion will include access to services, cultural sensitivity, prevention, treatment, advocacy, workforce needs, health promotion, data and information and integration of oral health within health systems and services. It is envisaged that another conference or workshop will take place in 2017 to monitor progress.

The University of Melbourne's [Indigenous Eye Health Unit](#) recently published a Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision in January – it is a very detailed, comprehensive publication and will provide us with plenty of inspiration in creating our report from the conference proceedings.

Invitations will be sent out soon. If you are interested in attending, please write to maddy.shearer@adelaide.edu.au

CURRENT PROJECTS

At present the IOHU is involved in several NHMRC (National Health & Medical Research Council) funded oral health interventions involving Indigenous Australians. Below we give a summary of three randomised controlled trials.

Perio-Cardio Study update

The Perio-Cardio study investigates the effect of non-surgical periodontal treatment on surrogate markers of cardiovascular disease among Indigenous Australian adults in the Northern Territory. These cardiovascular measures include blood pressure, blood cholesterol and sugar levels in addition to our primary measures - carotid artery intima-media thickness and carotid-dorsalis pedis pulse-wave-velocity. The latter two measures provide information on artery inflammation and stiffness respectively. Data collection commenced in June 2010, and 273 people with periodontitis have been recruited. Each participant is seen 3 times within one year (baseline, 3-month and annual). The 3-month follow-up appointments are due to be completed at the end of April 2012. To date, 165 3-month appointments have been completed and 97 participants have been lost to follow-up, representing a 60.4% completion rate. The rate of annual follow-up is marginally better, with 78 completed and 42 lost at present. This leaves 153 remaining to be seen. It is expected that data collection will be completed by the end of December 2012. Kostas Kapellas, a PhD student on the study has been involved with the data collection from the beginning and will complete the collection phase of the study before returning to Adelaide for data analysis.

Baby Teeth Talk study

The Baby Teeth Talk study seeks to determine if implementing a culturally-appropriate early childhood caries (ECC) intervention reduces dental disease burden and oral health inequalities among Indigenous children living in South Australia. The ECC intervention consists of four components: (1) provision of dental care; (2) the application of fluoride varnish to children's teeth; (3) motivational

interviewing and (4) anticipatory guidance. Participants are randomly assigned to two intervention groups, immediate or delayed. All participants receive the ECC intervention, though it is delayed 24 months for participants who are randomised to the control-delayed arm. In both groups, self-reported data will be collected at baseline (pregnancy) and when children are 24 and 36 months; and child clinical oral health status will be collected during standardised examinations conducted at 24 and 36 months by two calibrated dental professionals.

Participants must be pregnant residents of South Australia expecting an Australian Indigenous baby or babies, or who have recently given birth to an Indigenous baby or babies less than six weeks of age. Participants are recruited through referrals from a variety of sources including Indigenous groups, community services and hospitals. Recruitment commenced January 31, 2011 and will end May 4, 2012. As of three weeks before the end of recruitment, we have enrolled 405 participants. Participants are numerically split between metro and regional areas of SA, reflecting better enrolment outcomes in regional areas. Compared to estimates of the eligible population by region, we are enrolling 79% in regional areas and 47% in metro areas. We miss the eligible population both through failure to secure referrals and because of difficulties enrolling after they have been referred.

As we move into the second meeting with participants (focused on encouraging carers to learn more about the importance of non-cariogenic foods and drinks for their children), we are retaining four out of five of our participants. Some participants are also now moving into the third stage of the study, in which we focus on the importance of fluoride for early childhood caries prevention.

Teeth Talk Oral Health Literacy project

The *Teeth Talk* project is now in its third and final year. This project is aimed at determining if the implementation of a functional, context-specific oral health literacy intervention improves oral health literacy-related outcomes among regional Aboriginal adults. Outcomes measures include oral health knowledge, oral health self-care, utilisation of dental services and oral health-related self-efficacy. The project, based in Port Augusta, employs a project manager (a dental therapist) and 2 Aboriginal project officers who have been trained to present the intervention (5 education sessions) to participating community members. Questionnaires are completed at baseline, 12 months and 24 months. The education sessions were piloted in Whyalla in October 2010. Recruitment for the main project began in November 2010 and 400 eligible Aboriginal adults were enrolled. These were randomised into intervention and control groups. As advised by the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia and the Aboriginal Advisory Committee for the project all participants will have the opportunity to receive the intervention: participants in the intervention group were invited to attend sessions in 2011, those in the control group will be invited to attend sessions in 2012. In 2011 45% of the intervention group participated in the education sessions. The 12-month questionnaire has been completed by 72% of the 400 participants. All data collection will be completed by 2013.

PUBLICATIONS

We have one new publication - Shearer M, Jamieson LM. Indigenous Australians and Oral Health. In 'Oral Health Care - Prosthodontics, Periodontology, Biology, Research and Systemic Conditions'. Editor Mandeep Singh Viridi. Rijeka, Croatia, InTech. 2012, accessible from

http://cdn.intechopen.com/pdfs/29470/InTech-Indigenous_australians_and_oral_health.pdf

For a full list of ARCP OH/IOHU Indigenous oral health publications please see

<http://www.arcpoh.adelaide.edu.au/iohu/publications/>



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