



New ear health web resource for indigenous Australians

Nurses working with Aboriginal kids now have a new web resource at their fingertips, with the launch of EarInfoNet, a hearing information service for indigenous Australians.

The web resource aims to provide an outlet for issues relating to ear health and hearing issues among indigenous Australians. Statistics show that two out of three young Aboriginal children suffer from some form of ear damage, with the Northern Territory having the highest rate of ear disease in the world.

The EarInfoNet program, developed and maintained by the Menzies School of Health Research, in partnership with the Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, allows doctors, researchers, parents, nurses and anyone involved with indigenous health to access information about ear problems. The web resource provides up-to-date information on how to prevent and minimise the harm associated with ear disease and hearing loss.

"This site is perfect for nurses working with Aboriginal kids as it puts them directly in touch with treatment guidelines as well as clinical tools to assist them in documenting what they are seeing when they look in kids' ears, and how to treat it," nurse Susie Hopkins said.

EarInfoNet is much more than just a website, as the program aims to be responsive to the many people working with indigenous children affected by ear disease, said Hopkins. The web portal also provides a link for people working in this complex area to communicate with each other and, in turn, enables issues such as ear disease and hearing problems to be addressed in a more co-ordinated manner across Australia.

"Nurses will find loads of useful information and resources and should definitely join the e-network if they want to be kept up to date with what is happening in ear health and hearing in indigenous kids around Australia," Hopkins said.

Melbourne businessman Richard Pratt is the major sponsor of EarInfoNet and has promised \$1 million to help fix indigenous health problems.

EarInfoNet is compiled by the Menzies School of Health Research in association with the School of Indigenous Studies at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia and the Co-operative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health. ■

Further information see www.earinonet.org.au