

Hep B program highlights expertise as CDU Menzies School of Medicine seeks more student placements in the NT

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The CDU Menzies School of Medicine continues its momentum to advocate for the Australian Government to allocate 40 new placements for medical students in the Northern Territory.

Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) is a key partner to the School of Medicine, based in Darwin. Menzies has a history spanning 40 years of health research and scientific discovery, working to translate evidence into effective partnerships and programs in communities across Australia and the Asia Pacific region. Stanford University announced [12 Menzies researchers](#) are in the World's Top 2% of Scientists for their health research work across fields including tropical and emerging infectious diseases, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

Hep B PAST– A **P**artnership **A**pproach to **S**ustainably eliminating chronic Hepatitis B in the Northern **T**erritory, is an example of best practice implementation research Menzies is leading. Hep B PAST is working towards the elimination of Chronic Hepatitis B (CHB) amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Northern Territory. Hepatitis B is a virus that causes liver damage and can lead to liver cancer. It is often a lifelong condition which needs ongoing treatment and care. A vaccine is available to prevent Hepatitis B infections and medication is available to manage CHB.

Hep B PAST has been implemented in more than 50 communities in the NT. Its implementation has resulted in the program meeting and exceeding national targets for people living with CHB being aware of their condition, engaging in care, and undergoing treatment. The data shows awareness of infection sits at 92 per cent (national target of 80 per cent) and 70 per cent are engaged in care (national target of 50 per cent) with 22 per cent receiving treatment (national target of 20 per cent).

Hep B PAST has enabled people living with CHB and their communities to access culturally appropriate education tools in their first language. The Hep B Story educational app is available in 10 Aboriginal languages meaning 70 per cent of the Aboriginal people in the NT have access to CHB information in their first or preferred language. There are many aspects to this project, including a new co-designed training course for Aboriginal health staff.

Continued strong relationships have been key to the success of Menzies' projects. Hep B PAST has fostered and built on these relationships with their project partners NT Health, Miwatj Health Aboriginal Corporation, Katherine West Health Board, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Marthakal Homelands, Mala'la Health Service Aboriginal Corporation, Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine and the NT AIDS and Hepatitis Council. More information on Hep B PAST is available on Menzies' [website](#).

This is one of the many examples of how Menzies' partnership with Charles Darwin University and Western Sydney University will benefit Territorians and provide a foundation of best practice health research to new students as CDU Menzies School of Medicine grows, leading to a fully independent medical school.

The Commonwealth supported places (CSP) will assist in filling a critical shortage of doctors throughout the Territory while providing learning opportunities alongside outstanding clinical researchers and ensure community engagement experience within remote communities.

The CDU Menzies School of Medicine has applied for 40 out of 80 places on offer from the Commonwealth government in the Increasing Rural Medical Training Grant Opportunity. A Commonwealth-supported place (CSP) is a place at a university or higher education provider where the government pays part of your fees. This part is a subsidy, not a loan, and students do not have to pay it back.

Quotes attributable to Charles Darwin University (CDU) Menzies School of Medicine Foundation Dean, Professor Dianne Stephens OAM

“The CDU Menzies School of Medicine aims to strengthen medical education, training, and research for the benefit of regional and remote communities in the Northern Territory.

“New students will be given the opportunities that any other city around Australia can provide as well as the exposure to training in a remote setting while being supported by the best practice work of leading health clinical researchers.

“Menzies School of Health Research continues to be recognised both nationally and internationally for addressing health challenges that translate into changes in policy and practice.

“This partnership ensures we are on track to build a medical school that addresses the health issues of Territorians.”

Quotes attributable to Menzies School of Health Research Principal Research Fellow, [Associate Professor Jane Davies](#):

“Hep B PAST has not only seen these wonderful outcomes for patients, but it is also leading the country in attainment of the national targets in these areas. This is something we can all be proud of.”

“And following the success of the Hep B Story App and our staff training, a key recommendation in the 4th National Hepatitis B Strategy is for all people living with chronic hepatitis B to have their diagnosis explained in their first language within 6 months of the diagnosis.”

“We have the necessary tools in place to achieve elimination of CHB: along with an effective vaccine and antivirals, we have trained staff and the app alongside most importantly, long-term relationships between project partners and Aboriginal communities.”

Quotes attributable to Menzies School of Health Research Director, [Professor Alan Cass AO](#)

“Hep B PAST represents a remarkable NT-wide partnership.

“Students at the CDU Menzies School of Medicine will be able to engage with world class research teams who are making a real and measurable impact to Close the Gap.”

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Menzies School of Health Research

Menzies is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and a leader in global and tropical research into life-threatening illnesses. Menzies continues to translate research into effective partnerships and programs in communities across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.