

New resource package to improve nutrition in remote communities

Thursday, 22 August 2013

A new resource package focused on improving nutrition in remote stores in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will help to address the poor state of diets in remote Indigenous populations.

With support from The Fred Hollows Foundation, the Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) has developed a *Talking about Shelf Labels* flipchart and a comprehensive resource manual as part of its Remote Stores Project.

Dietary improvement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians is a priority for reducing the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Poor quality diets are a significant risk factor for three of the major causes of premature death - cardiovascular disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes.

Research Fellow with Menzies' Nutrition Research Team, Dr Susan Colles said a number of remote communities have previously used shelf labels to highlight healthier food and drink choices to help promote good nutrition in remote community stores.

"But there's been limited support available, for instance there were no tools for developing, implementing, maintaining and evaluating effective shelf label projects," Dr Colles said.

The Remote Stores Project worked with four communities across Arnhem Land, Cape York, Central Australia and The Torres Straits, to gather information on what sort of shelf label systems currently existed, which were effective and accepted in communities, what sort of tools were necessary and how to work with local people to develop culturally appropriate shelf label projects.

"In each site we collaborated with local people together with store staff, health professionals and other stakeholders to develop and implement shelf label projects and other activities for their stores," Dr Colles said.

"The findings from this process were used to form a resource package which will assist health and nutrition staff to work with store staff and communities to develop and evaluate a program based on putting better labelling or "shelf talkers" in community stores," Dr Colles said.

The resource will benefit Indigenous families, remote nutritionists, remote area store staff and health professionals working in communities.

The 'Talking about Shelf Labels' resource package can be used when:

- Talking with community leaders, members and stakeholders about shelf labels to help people decide whether they want a shelf label in their store
- Talking about what people might want or expect from a shelf label program
- Helping people decide what their shelf labels might say or look like, and how to provide clear health messages
- Looking for practical training ideas, and for building effective systems for monitoring and maintaining shelf labels

Dr Colles said the resource package also focuses on the promotion of strong partnerships with community store staff. She hopes that people working in remote nutrition and food supply will access the tools and work in conjunction with communities to promote healthy food choices.

The Remote Stores Project was funded through The Fred Hollows Foundation. Menzies would like to thank all communities, store organisations and stakeholder organisations that participated in this study.

A small number of hard copies of the 'Talking about shelf labels' flipchart are available by contacting Karen Black on Ph: 08 8922 6541 E: karen.black@menzies.edu.au

This resource is available to download from:

http://www.menzies.edu.au/page/Resources/Talking_about_shelf_labels/

The resource manual is available upon request E: communications@menzies.edu.au

Media contact: Richmond Hodgson

communications@menzies.edu.au; 08 8922 8438; 0408 128 099

Background: Menzies School of Health Research are Australia's only Medical Research Institute dedicated to improving Indigenous health and wellbeing. We have a 27-year history of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies work at the frontline and collaborate broadly, partnering with over 60 Indigenous communities across Northern Australia to create resources, grow local skills, and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.