

New app to improve treatment of Hepatitis B in remote Indigenous communities

Thursday, 17 July 2014

The launch of a new iPad app is hoping to address the prevalence and severity of Hepatitis B infections in remote Indigenous communities.

Infection with Hepatitis B virus (HBV) can lead to liver failure and liver cancer. In Northern Australia, between 10 and 20 per cent of the Indigenous population is infected with HBV.

Low health literacy levels and language barriers are recognised as barriers to meaningful community engagement and appropriate health care of people living with HBV infection.

Developed by the Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies), the Hep B Story iPad App has been designed to enable Indigenous people and their health care workers to achieve a shared understanding of biomedical concepts surrounding hepatitis B infection.

The interactive App, available in Yolŋu matha and English, was officially unveiled yesterday at a ceremony held in Galiwin'ku with key community members directly involved in the app's design.

Research project leader, Dr Jane Davies said the Menzies Hep B team had been motivated by an ever-present desire for knowledge among community members to drive the development of an information tool that will meet educational needs.

"The Menzies Hep B Team have spent the last two years collaborating and developing an educational tool to help develop strong treatment partnerships between health workers, community members and Indigenous patients with HBV," Dr Davies said.

"We have had a lot of enthusiasm throughout the development of the App from both health workers and patients and look forward to seeing the app in use."

The App will soon be available for download free of charge from iTunes.

The development of the Hep B Story App was funded by an unrestricted grant from Gilead Sciences and salary support from the NHMRC.

Media note:

Dr Jane Davies is a PhD scholar at the Menzies school of Health Research and an Infectious Diseases clinician at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Dr Davies' research focuses on Hepatitis B in the Northern Territory.

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Menzies Background

Menzies School of Health Research is Australia's only Medical Research Institute dedicated to improving Indigenous health and wellbeing. We have a 28-year history of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies works at the frontline, partnering with over 60 Indigenous communities across Northern and Central Australia. We collaborate to create resources, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.