

FIRST EVER WORLD INDIGENOUS CANCER CONFERENCE COMES TO BRISBANE

12 April 2016

Indigenous communities, consumers and health experts will come together today at the opening of the inaugural World Indigenous Cancer Conference (WICC) at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The WICC 2016 theme is 'Connecting, Communicating, and Collaborating, with the international event providing a forum for over 300 delegates from across the globe to discuss the latest findings, develop meaningful collaborations and encourage high quality cancer research.

Hosted by Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies), in partnership with the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), WICC 2016 will draw on the expertise of leading cancer researchers, public health practitioners, clinicians, advocacy groups and Indigenous community leaders.

Archie Roach will feature as the conference's special guest and will bring his knowledge and experience in social justice and Indigenous welfare to his presentation on wellness & survivorship in the context of the patient-doctor relationship.

Associate Professor Gail Garvey, the WICC Committee Chair, says that Indigenous people comprise about six per cent of the world's population and their poorer health and social disadvantage significantly contribute to lower life expectancies.

"Globally, cancer has been largely overlooked among Indigenous populations despite research showing they have significantly greater mortality and lower cancer survival rates.

"In Australia alone, cancer remains the second leading cause of death among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people," A/Prof Garvey explained.

The burden of cancer among Indigenous populations is of major public health importance and forums for collaboration such as this conference will strengthen research and service delivery.

The three-day conference program will feature presentations, discussion and planning across the entire cancer continuum, from cancer prevention through to end of life care.

In addition to the conference program, an Australian Indigenous advisory group has created a three-day Yarning Circle program for conference participants to listen to others and share stories of cancer survival.

"Menzies launched Australia's first Indigenous cancer research centre in 2013 as we believe that health research and evidence-based service improvement both play a critical role in extending and improving millions of lives each year," A/Prof Garvey said.

Eminent keynote speakers for the three-day conference include Professor David R Williams, a leading social scientist from Harvard University, Professor Tom Calma, an inspirational advocate for human rights and social justice for Indigenous Australians, and Dr Linda Burhansstipanov, who has over 40 years' experience in working on Native American public health issues.

This conference has been made possible by the support of foundation partner Cancer Council NSW, who have partially funded WICC as part of a strategic partnership grant, STREP Ca-CIndA, patron sponsor Queensland Health, major sponsor Cancer Australia, and many other sponsors and supporters.

For more details about the conference, or to download the full program, please visit the website: www.menzies.edu.au/WICC2016.

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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 30-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.