

Capacity building

In addition to our cutting-edge laboratory-based and biomedical research, we strive to increase the capacity of communities, health service providers, Indigenous health workers, health professionals, and researchers – to help them deliver better services based on evidence about what works, and what doesn't.

Empowering communities to implement rheumatic fever prevention strategies

For two decades, we have been at the forefront of research into rheumatic fever. The drivers of high rheumatic fever rates are understood by clinicians and researchers; however, major barriers to translating this information to affected communities and empowering them to take steps to reduce their risk still exist.

On Track Watch, a community-based participatory action research project, addresses this challenge in a sustainable way. To begin, more than ten community members are commencing Menzies' Certificate II in Community Health Research.

As part of the course, trainees learn about and implement rheumatic fever prevention strategies. These include better health literacy through to stronger self-management and recognising and treating the streptococcal infections which drive rheumatic fever.

Providing a training ground for health professionals

2016 saw our Child Health division hosting Indigenous trainees, students and visiting scientists as well as the appointment of the inaugural Sue Sayers Bursary placement.

Indigenous trainee, Susanne Munkara from the Tiwi Islands, joined medical, nursing, dietetic and science students to work with the Menzies HealthLAB while completing her Certificate III in Health and Community Services.

Indigenous trainee, Erin Gargan studied microbiology and molecular biology, hosted by the child health laboratory team. This enabled her to complete her Certificate III in Laboratory Skills before commencing a science degree in 2017. The team also hosted CDU students, Angela Rumaseb and Niko Tsangaris for their placements units.

Vietnamese scientists, Hoan Pham and Thuy Nguyen spent six weeks working with the child health laboratory team as part of an exchange with the Pasteur Institute in Ho Chi Minh City. Associate Professor Heidi Smith-Vaughan and Child Health laboratory manager, Jemima Beissbarth in turn spent time in Ho Chi Minh City training a larger group of scientists.

