



# Researchers at world conference



FROM Arnhem Land to Anchorage in Alaska, three Galiwin'ku researchers have discovered that all indigenous peoples face similar challenges.

Community-based researchers Sarah Bukulatjpi, George Gurruwiwi and Roslyn Dhurrkay, from Galiwin'ku in the Northern Territory, recently spoke on viral hepatitis at the World Indigenous Peoples' Conference in Anchorage. They were representing the Menzies School of Health Research.

"We realised it's not just our people in Arnhem Land (that have hepatitis health concerns), it's all over the world," Ms Dhurrkay said. "We're not alone."

"In Galiwin'ku, people feel shame about hepatitis B. Now I can tell them it's not just them, and that people all over the world have this problem, and people all over the world are working on it."

The conference included Indigenous people from 13 countries sharing their stories of how they diagnose, treat and raise community awareness of

viral hepatitis.

Hepatitis B virus infection can lead to liver failure and liver cancer. Up to 20% of the

Indigenous population of the Northern Territory is infected with it.

Ms Dhurrkay said the sharing of stories provided valuable insights.

"We felt proud sharing what we do in our community," she

said. "Other countries were impressed by how Yolngu people helped each other.

"We talked about our hep B story app and how we go to people's homes to talk to them about hep B."

Menzies hepatitis B program coordinator Paula Binks said attending the conference reinforced the importance of the researchers' work.

"When you work in communities it is a long process, but you need to build trust and consult with them, and use their language to pass on the knowledge to them," she said.

Ms Dhurrkay's presentation was in the form of a video, of her speaking in Yolngu Matha

about the women's business aspect and obtaining informed consent for research, while Mr Gurruwiwi presented on his work going from house to house to obtain samples and deliver education.

Ms Bukulatjpi talked about the "liver one-stop shop" project in the community where people with hepatitis B receive regular care from a visiting liver specialist, as well as ultrasounds and a scan to assess the stiffness of the liver.

"We hope to have the one-stop shop in more communities near Galiwin'ku," she said.

"Hepatitis B is a big problem in a lot of communities, and we want to help."



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**Researchers Melita McKinnon, Sarah Bukulatjpi, Paula Binks, Roslyn Dhurrkay and George Gurruwiwi visit a glacier during their trip to the US state of Alaska for the conference.**