
MEDIA RELEASE

Advancing the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with chronic and end stage kidney disease

Australia's first people remain amongst the most vulnerable in the world to deadly kidney disease and one prominent researcher feels a unique obligation to do something about it.

Australia's only Indigenous kidney specialist, Dr Jaquelyne Hughes, is conducting research into kidney disease, a devastating but potentially preventable condition that affects thousands of Indigenous Australians.

For her achievements in this area, Dr Hughes has been recognised as a finalist for the Bupa Health Foundation Emerging Health Research Award. Dr Hughes is a national leader in kidney disease research who has been working with policy makers, clinicians and the community to help drive awareness of the issue.

As part of her research, Dr Hughes helped lead the Indigenous patients voice symposium at the annual scientific meeting for kidney specialists (nephrologists).

"It was the very first time in 53 years of our society of nephrologists to be able to have a forum like that at our annual scientific meeting," says Dr Hughes.

"We had more than 80 participants come to that meeting in September last year and it was just an open floor and we asked participants (these were health care users) about how they felt about the health care available to them, and what they recommended for change."

The recommendations helped shape the symposium report and are now being considered as part of a federal health strategy.

"We have already submitted this to the Close the Gap Campaign, steering committee (who has already endorsed the report) and we would like to work with them in the next twelve months about the Close the Gap refresh."

"In terms of determining those measures that the community want as well as Health Services want to measure the progress that we're making in health advancements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are some of the most vulnerable populations for chronic and end state kidney disease, not just in Australia but Internationally.

Professor Alan Cass, Director of Menzies School of Health Research nominated Dr Hughes for the Bupa Health Foundation Emerging Researcher Award for her passion and commitment to reducing the impact of kidney disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"The problems are very real that we address. You could never suggest that the devastating impact of kidney disease that she addresses is anything other than a most profoundly important problem. She doesn't want to do research, for the sake of doing research, she wants to do research that will have an impact," says Professor Cass.

“So, this work to advance health for chronic and end stage kidney disease, is less about my career, it’s more about health advancement for so many people who shouldn’t even know my name,” said Dr Hughes.

The winner of the 2017 Bupa Health Foundation Emerging Health Researcher Award will be announced on 16 March 2018, at a breakfast event in Sydney. The winner will be awarded \$25,000 to help further their research career, while the other five finalists will each receive \$5,000.

Ends

Notes for the editor

Name/Title: Jaquelyne Hughes, NHMRC Early Career Research Fellow & Nephrologist
Menzies School of Health Research and Royal Darwin Hospital

Area of research: Reducing rates of chronic kidney disease (CKD) in Indigenous communities

Nominator: Professor Alan Cass, Director of Menzies School of Health Research

Australia’s first and only Indigenous nephrologist (kidney specialist), Dr Jaquelyne Hughes is conducting research into chronic and end stage kidney disease, potentially preventable conditions that affects a high number of Indigenous Australians. Dr Hughes is a national leader in kidney disease research and works with policy makers, clinicians, and the community to help drive awareness of the issue. As part of her research, she helped lead the Indigenous patients voice symposium at the annual Nephrologists scientific meeting. The recommendations helped shape the symposium report with the recommendations for policy taken into consideration.

More information on the Bupa Health Foundation and Emerging Researcher Awards

The Bupa Health Foundation is one of Australia’s leading corporate foundations dedicated to health. We are committed to improving the health of the Australian community and ensuring the sustainability of affordable healthcare through collaborative partnerships.

The Bupa Health Foundation was established in 2005 and has invested more than \$30million to support over 120 projects in real health and care improvements.

The Emerging Health Researcher Awards is celebrating its sixth anniversary after being established in 2012.

For more information please visit www.bupa.com.au/foundation.