

Making hepatitis B information more widely available to Indigenous communities

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Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) is doing its part to ensure more Indigenous people living in the Northern Territory have access to potentially life-saving information about hepatitis B (HBV) this World Hepatitis Day.

The Menzies HBV research team estimates more than 70 per cent of Indigenous Territorians will benefit from learning about HBV in their first language as the Hep B Story app will be translated into 10 additional Indigenous languages.

The theme for this year's World Hepatitis Day is 'Finding the Missing Millions', which is in line with Menzies' goal of providing people vulnerable to the virus culturally-appropriate information through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funded Hep B PAST research collaboration.

"By making information about HBV accessible and available in first languages, we can improve community health literacy," said Menzies researcher, Dr Jane Davies.

"This will help people better understand the disease, setting the groundwork for us to work towards eliminating chronic HBV in the NT, by 2023.

"There are just over 4,000 Territorians with HBV, but not all of them understand why they need blood tests or vaccinations."

Together with partners, including the Northern Territory Government, Miwatj Aboriginal Corporation, Katherine West Health Board, Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine and the NT AIDS and Hepatitis Council, Menzies is developing a NT HBV clinical registry.

This collaboration will enable appropriate HBV care to be delivered to those who need it in a systematic and sustainable way.

The Hep B Story app was developed by Menzies in 2014. It provides information about how HBV is contracted, as well as symptoms, treatments and immunisation.

The app is currently available in English and Yolngu matha, but in the near future it will also include translations into Kriol, Arrernte, Murrinh-Patha, Pitjantjatjara, Warlpiri, Tiwi, Kunwinjku, Anindilyakwa, Burarra and Gurindji.

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Menzies School of Health Research

Menzies School of Health Research is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving Indigenous, global and tropical health. Menzies has a history of over 30 years of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies works at the frontline, joining with partners across the Asia-Pacific as well as Indigenous communities across northern and central Australia. Menzies collaborates to create new knowledge, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.