

## New multi-platform interactive guidelines for healthy ears

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Ear infections are a common health issue for young children, which if left untreated can cause lifelong hearing damage.

To mark World Hearing Day, new multi-platform interactive guidelines to assist healthcare workers to deliver up-to-date evidence-based care to children with otitis media (ear infections), are being launched today.

Also available as an app, the *Otitis Media Guidelines*, is an information and multimedia tool to assist primary health care providers across Australia in the delivery of comprehensive, effective and appropriate care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with otitis media and hearing problems.

The guidelines have been developed by the Centre of Research Excellence in Ear and Hearing Health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children (I-CHEAR).

I-CHEAR director and Menzies School of Health Research senior principal research fellow, Professor Amanda Leach AM, says that the updated, evidence-based guidelines are needed to improve delivery and access to quality ear health care across Australia.

“Children, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, are disproportionately affected by ear infections. All forms of otitis media cause conductive hearing loss, some forms cause disabling hearing loss. If persistent or chronic this increases language delay, speech problems, high vulnerability on entering school, social isolation, poor school attendance and low education and employment opportunities,” Prof Leach said.

“The new guidelines provide clear information about prevention, diagnosis, prognosis and management of otitis media for health practitioners working in both urban and remote settings, with low- or high-risk children. Families can also benefit from the culturally appropriate resources within the app, such as cartoons, and the Communicate and Education sections which have been translated and audio-recorded into five Aboriginal languages and can be downloaded at the clinic for later use.”

Associate Professor Kelvin Kong, chief investigator of I-CHEAR says that the number of people living with unaddressed hearing loss and ear diseases is unacceptable.

“These guidelines enable health care professionals and workers in the community to diagnose, treat and educate ear infections in one place. The addition of the app allows a much greater interactive process that we are keen for people to use and assist the community.”

The Otitis Media Guidelines app (OMApp) includes:

- Evidence-based guidelines prepared using the international GRADE approach
- Algorithms (10) to assist with clinical decision making
- Audio recordings in five Aboriginal languages to assist with communication
- Multimedia educational materials for health workers, families and children.

The OMAApp is freely available for download via the [Apple Store](#) or [Google Play](#) or order a hardcopy here: <https://www.earandhearinghealth.org.au/projects/2020-om-guidelines>.

A summary of the guidelines and the recommendations has been published in the Medical Journal of Australia today. This article can be read in full here: <http://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.50953>

The theme for this World Hearing Day is *Hearing care for all: Screen. Rehabilitate. Communicate.*

ENDS

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**Menzies School of Health Research**

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