

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Watching, waiting for healthy hearing

Professor Jennifer Reath, Dr Penelope Abbott and Professor Wendy Hu of the School of Medicine, and Associate Professor Federico Girosi of the Centre for Health Research, with research partners including five Aboriginal Community Controlled Primary Health Care Services and Inala Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Service are investigating ways to manage ear infections in urban Aboriginal Children. The National Health and Medical Research Council funded project will compare a “watchful waiting approach” used for non-Aboriginal Children with the immediate use of antibiotics recommended for Aboriginal Children living in remote areas.

‘Acute otitis media [middle ear infection] is a major cause of ill health in children and a common reason for antibiotic prescriptions,’ Professor Reath says. ‘Ear health is an important Aboriginal health issue. Aboriginal Children have higher rates of middle ear infections than other children, and complications of ear disease include hearing impairment which can affect education and quality of life. Also antibiotic resistance is growing in Aboriginal communities.’

National guidelines recommend observation and waiting to see if antibiotics are needed. This “watchful waiting approach” is now recommended for urban Aboriginal Children at low risk of complications. Professor Reath and her team will study the relative effectiveness of the watchful waiting approach while also gauging its cost-effectiveness and assessing its acceptability among parents, carers and health care providers.

Avoidable hearing loss and chronic infection must be prevented and this study will inform the treatment of ear infections in Aboriginal Children.

Aboriginal Organisations:

AMS Western Sydney; Awabakal AMS; Brisbane



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service; Inala Indigenous Health Service; Winnunga Nimmityjah AMS; and Tharawal Aboriginal Corporation.

Project Title: Randomised controlled trial of antimicrobial treatment versus watchful waiting for acute otitis media without perforation in low-risk Aboriginal Children

Other Chief Investigators: Dr Hasantha Gunasekera (Children’s Hospital Westmead), Prof Amanda Leach (Menzies School of Health Research), A/Prof Deborah Askew (Qld Health), Dr Chelsea Bond (University of Queensland) and A/Prof Kelvin Kong (University of Newcastle)

Associate Investigators: A/Prof David Peiris (The George Institute), Dr Geoffrey Spurling (Inala Indigenous Health Service), Prof Peter Morris (Menzies School of Health Research), Ms Sanja Lujic (UWS), Prof Timothy Usherwood (Sydney University), A/Prof Dea Delaney-Thiele (AMSWS), Dr Nadeem Siddiqui (Winnunga Nimmityjah AMS, Ms Markeeta Douglas (Awabakal Aboriginal Medical Service)

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