



**Department of General Practice, School of Medicine secures 2017 NHMRC funding for ground breaking research into ear disease in urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children**

We are pleased to announce our recent success in receiving funding for *the INFLATE Trial* through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Project Grant scheme. Researchers from the Department of General Practice at Western Sydney University will work with seven urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services and other University partners to investigate an innovative alternative to treating Glue ear (otitis media with effusion). *The INFLATE Trial* is a multi-centre randomised controlled trial that will examine nasal balloon auto-inflation for glue ear in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in urban areas

Dr Penny Abbott, Senior Lecturer with the Department of General Practice, explains ‘We will see if the use of a simple device in which a child blows up a balloon with their nostrils helps resolve glue ear, improves hearing and is acceptable for the management of this important problem’.

The team has responded to research ideas arising from the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health sector, consistent with NHMRC’s call for patient focused research. The team has now been successful in two grant applications for landmark Australian trials examining treatments for otitis media: the *WATCH Trial* and now the *INFLATE Trial*.

‘An important aspect of *the INFLATE trial* is that it allows us to continue our strong research partnerships with the participating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services. These services and their staff have been committed to promoting high quality research which matters to their communities and which improves the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’, said Dr Abbott.



Glue ear is one of the most common childhood diseases, causes of hearing loss and reasons for surgery in children. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have the highest rates of persistent, severe and complicated otitis media, and this could have a significant impact on their health, development and educational attainment.

Despite the impact of OME, there is limited evidence for effective non-surgical options. *The INFLATE trial* will be one of very few intervention trials in a population at high risk of middle ear disease and will have international relevance. Use of autoinflation could result in large health benefits and health system cost savings through less antibiotic use and fewer operations.

### **Chief Investigators**

Doctor Penelope Abbott, Western Sydney University

Professor Jennifer Reath, Western Sydney University

Doctor Hasantha Gunasekera, University of Sydney

Professor Amanda Leach, Menzies School of Health Research

Associate Professor Kelvin Kong, University of Newcastle

Associate Professor Deborah Askew, Southern Queensland Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care, Queensland Health

Associate Professor Federico Giroi, Western Sydney University

Professor Wendy Hu, Western Sydney University

Professor Timothy Usherwood, University of Sydney

Ms Sanja Lujic, University of New South Wales

### **Associate Investigators**

Geoff Spurling

Peter Morris

Samantha Harkus

Representatives from participating Aboriginal Medical Services to be appointed