



The Royal Australasian
College of Physicians

Media release

RACP calls for immunisation action

30 April 2015

Australasia's leading physicians and paediatricians are united in their call for all healthcare professionals to be vigilant in ensuring children are immunised.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) President Laureate Professor Nick Talley said World Immunisation Week (22 to 30 April 2015) is a timely reminder of the need to eradicate life-threatening and unnecessary disease.

"No other medical intervention has been as effective as immunisation at preventing infectious disease and saving lives," Professor Talley said.

Paediatrician, Professor Robert Booy said despite overall high immunisation rates in Australia and New Zealand, some groups of children still experience lower rates of immunisation.

"A child who has not been immunised is at a much higher risk of disease - while this continues to happen, physicians and paediatricians will keep advocating for the prevention of unnecessary deaths among our next generation," Professor Booy said.

While the national average in Australia of full immunisation of five year olds is just above 90 per cent, there are suburbs where the rate is as low as 66 per centⁱ.

"Immunisation builds a child or infant's barrier of protection for their age. This increases their ability to fight potentially deadly viruses and infections should they come into contact with them," Professor Booy said.

"Areas where immunisation rates are lower increase the risk of crippling illnesses such as whooping cough spreading quickly."

In New Zealand, the full immunisation rate for children aged five was 81 per cent for the year ending December 2014. For the same period, the rate for two year olds was 93 per centⁱⁱ.

"Inconsistent immunisation rates among Australian and New Zealand children increase the risk of potentially fatal diseases," Professor Booy said.

"As physicians we must ensure families are equipped with the evidence-based information to make the best decisions.

"This not only protects their children from avoidable diseases and death, but also those too young to be immunised and those unable to be vaccinated due to medical reasons – children relying on herd immunisation to keep well."

Ends

Media contact: Ryan Lipman ph: +61 2 9256 9650 or ryan.lipman@racp.edu.au

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About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 14,950 physicians – often referred to as medical specialists – and 6,530 Trainee members across Australia and New Zealand. The College represents more than 32 medical specialties including paediatrics & child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology and public health medicine, occupational & environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients. www.racp.edu.au

ⁱ National Health Performance Authority, Healthy Communities: Immunisation rates for children in 2012–13. Available from http://www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au/0B8675C4-AC2B-4890-8F1C-57B43739A291/FinalDownload/DownloadId-ECABF9A0237885DB59CE366D5FD2EC00/0B8675C4-AC2B-4890-8F1C-57B43739A291/Content/publications/downloads/NHPA_HC_Report_Imm_Rates_March_2014.pdf

ⁱⁱ New Zealand Ministry of Health. National and DHB immunisation data. Page updated 12 March 2015. Cited 28 April 2015. Available from <http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/preventative-health-wellness/immunisation/immunisation-coverage/national-and-dhb-immunisation-data>