



Media release

RACP calls for life-saving changes to newborn screening

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Australasia's largest medical college is seeking Australia-wide changes to newborn screening that could have life-saving implications.

At its annual Congress today in Cairns, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) launched its *Newborn Screening Position Statement* calling for a national approach to establish a way for new conditions to be evaluated and recommended.

Paediatrician Dr Janice Fletcher said newborn screening is critical to child health as early identification and timely intervention of certain congenital disorders can reduce death and disabilities.

"The initial stages of life can be the most vulnerable - it is necessary to ensure newborn screening is as up to date and appropriate as possible, especially if it means better health outcomes for newborns," Dr Fletcher said.

The RACP proposes a nationally representative panel of experts to undertake evaluation of new screening tests for newborns.

Presently, newborn screening is a public health issue without a current mechanism for coordination and advancement across Australia.

"A framework for improving and expanding newborn screening across Australia will improve health outcomes and overall population health," Dr Fletcher said.

A national approach to newborn screening would also standardise the practice across all states and territories, as well as improving consistency in protocols such as storage of residual dried blood spot cards.

"A standardised national approach to newborn screening would address a range of issues including equity, informed consent and ethical factors," Dr Fletcher said.

If an evaluation mechanism is established, conditions that are screened in other countries could be added to Australian newborn screening programs including congenital adrenal hyperplasia, severe combined immunodeficiency, Fragile X and some Lysosomal storage diseases.

Ends

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