



RACP Foundation Research Awards

FINAL REPORT

Project / Program Title		Aboriginal community capacity building in the SToP trial: a cluster randomised trial with a stepped wedge design to reduce the burden of skin infections in remote Aboriginal communities
Name		Dr Asha Bowen
Award Received		2019 Bayer Australia Medical Research Establishment Fellowship
Report Date		11 February 2020
Chief Investigator / Supervisor		Dr Asha Bowen
Administering Institution		Telethon Kids Institute
Funding Period	Start Date:	1 January 2019
	Finish Date:	31 December 2019

PROJECT SUMMARY

Skin is important in Australian Aboriginal culture informing kinship and identity. In many remote Aboriginal communities, skin infections (scabies and impetigo) are very common. Untreated skin infections are painful, itchy and frequently go untreated due to under-recognition and lack of awareness of their potential serious complications. We hypothesise that the skin infection burden in remote Aboriginal communities can be reduced by implementing streamlined training and treatment pathways integrated with environmental health and health promotion activities, tested in the SToP (See, Treat, Prevent skin sores and scabies) trial.

PROJECT AIMS / OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the SToP trial is to reduce the burden of impetigo and scabies by 50% in children aged 5-9 years living in 4 remote Aboriginal community clusters in the Kimberley WA. To measure the primary outcome, children aged 5 – 9 years of age attending the community school will be enrolled in ongoing surveillance of skin infection rates throughout the trial.

The addition of capacity building of Aboriginal Environmental Health officers who are community based and employed within a partner organisation was a novel inclusion made possible with support from RACP. The Aboriginal Environmental Health officers led the recruitment process for the surveillance activities of the trial; obtaining informed consent from parents / caregivers by and utilising purpose-made flipcharts that also contained health promotion materials. This allowed adequate time (approx. 1hour per household) to be spent with parents/caregivers to speak with Environmental Health officers who had existing relationships and community-specific knowledge to ensure informed consent was completed in a culturally secure manner.

SIGNIFICANCE AND OUTCOMES

One full day of training was delivered by SToP trial team to 8 Aboriginal Environmental Health officers, on the SToP trial and good clinical practice principles and methodologies. Ongoing training and support was provided by the SToP trial team throughout the recruitment phase.

Recruitment by the Aboriginal Environmental Health officers has been incredibly successful and has resulted in >100% successful recruitment rate across all community clusters in the trial. Over 700 children were enrolled into the trial in 2019.

As a result of this successful recruitment, it has also seen the success of the first year of data collection and surveillance visits, with >1000 skin checks completed with school-aged children.

PUBLICATIONS / PRESENTATIONS

The Aboriginal Environmental Health officers involved in the trial have been supported to be first authors on scientific posters reporting the training and consent process. To date these posters have been accepted for presentation at:

- The International Meeting for Indigenous Child Health (IMICH) in Calgary, Canada March 22-24 2019.
- Science on the Swan Conference 5-7 June 2019.
- Rural Health West Aboriginal Conference July 2019.

Ref: Poelina R., Mahony T., Clements W., Mc Loughlin F., Donovan R., Mullane M., Pavlos R., Walker R., Coffin J., O'Donnell V., Christophers R., Smith B., Carapetis J., Bowen A.

A preliminary PhD student is currently evaluating the recruitment process of the trial and the involvement of the Aboriginal Environmental Health officers that this grant supported. A publication will be developed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Publications reporting on the recruitment process and involvement of Aboriginal environmental health officers have not yet been completed. However, a publication will be developed and RACP will be acknowledged.