

GP Connect

Keeping GPs informed in the changing primary health landscape



9 May 2024

AIR data shows need to offer more WA infants RSV immunisation to protect from hospitalisation

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During the month of April, less than half of all immunisation encounters for age-eligible infants resulted in nirsevimab being co-administered with routine childhood vaccinations. According to data in the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR), there were 4,611 immunisation encounters at which nirsevimab might have been co-administered to age eligible infants but was not; in 90 per cent of those encounters the child had received two or fewer vaccination injections at that visit.

The reasons that nirsevimab is not co-administered to age-eligible infants at routine immunisation encounters is likely to be due to multiple factors, including parental preference. However, published data from overseas and anecdotal reports from WA providers indicate a very high rate of acceptance when nirsevimab is offered to parents of newborns.

The fact that nirsevimab was administered with other childhood immunisations on 3,957 occasions in April suggests many WA parents are comfortable with co-administration of nirsevimab.

Historically RSV transmission is widespread in WA by June, so every effort should be made to administer nirsevimab to age-eligible children before June.



Immunisation providers are strongly encouraged to recommend co-administration of nirsevimab for all eligible children presenting for routine childhood vaccinations during May. If an age-eligible infant is not scheduled for a routine vaccination visit in May, providers should actively recall these vulnerable infants so they can be protected before RSV season begins.

BREAKING NEWS... for every 25 infants given nirsevimab one RSV-related hospitalisation is prevented!

Real-world data from Spain just published in [The Lancet](#) show's that nirsevimab was 82 per cent effective at preventing hospitalisation for RSV-related illness and 87 per cent effective against severe RSV illness requiring oxygen support. The study also found that for every 25 infants who received nirsevimab one RSV-related hospitalisation was prevented. This data indicates that if WA is successful in immunising 20,000 infants with nirsevimab, we can prevent about 800 hospitalisations this winter. This would be a wonderful outcome for WA families.

The Communicable Disease Control Directorate sincerely thanks the 675 providers who have already administered one or more doses of nirsevimab to a vulnerable WA infant.

For links to resources, clinical updates and more, visit news.wapha.org.au

Clinical Updates

RSV Infant Immunisation at WA birthing hospitals begins

Beginning 2 May 2024, RSV infant immunisation is now available through WA birthing hospitals for all babies born during the WA RSV season, i.e., May through September 2024.

Recording of newborn immunisation encounters in the Australian Immunisation Register can sometimes be delayed, but parents should have documentation of their infant's nirsevimab immunisation provided by the hospital.

If a newborn is discharged from hospital and has not already received nirsevimab, WA Health advises they should be offered immunisation in outpatient settings at the earliest opportunity prior to 30 September 2024.

A succinct 2-page "[RSV Quick Reference Guide](#)" is available from WA Health to assist busy practices in determining key program information such as eligibility, dosing and more.

Protecting your patients with winter vaccines

In addition to Influenza and RSV, COVID-19 is also common in colder months – and COVID-19 vaccines can be provided at the same time as a flu vaccine.

The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care (DHAC) encourages immunisation providers to review the [ATAGI statement on the administration of seasonal influenza vaccines](#) and [2024 Program advice for health professionals](#).

[2024 WA influenza immunisation program advice](#) is also available from WA Department of Health.

You can also provide a [consumer fact sheet](#) to patients about the 2024 flu vaccine.

Further information to help answer your patients' common questions about Influenza and COVID-19, along with RSV vaccination is available on the [DHAC website](#).

Free access to syphilis Point-of-Care tests

To help control the WA syphilis outbreak, the WA Department of Health offers interested health services access to free syphilis Point-of-Care (PoC) tests for client testing.

Syphilis PoC tests offer a reactive or non-reactive result to syphilis antibodies within 15 minutes. A reactive syphilis PoC test in a patient with no history of syphilis allows treatment and contact tracing on the day of presentation, compared to waiting for the results of syphilis serology and follow-up. Enrolled services are provided the testing supplies and training for the syphilis PoC testing strips for FREE.

For more information or to find out how to enrol, please contact the syphilis PoC testing program at syphilispoct@health.wa.gov.au

Fiona Stanley Hospital Rapid Access Neck Lump Clinic -GP placements now available

The Cancer Council is now offering limited GP placements at the head and neck cancer (HNC) supervised clinical attachment at Fiona Stanley Hospital. Participation in the two, half-day clinics provides an opportunity for GPs to further understand the HNC referral and diagnostic process at the Rapid Access Neck Lump Clinic, and observe and network with multiple sub-specialists who together make "live" decisions regarding recommended treatment for individual patients.

This RACGP accredited activity will attract 9 hours for reviewing performance and 2 hours for educational activities.

[Download the flyer](#) for more information and express your interest by emailing the Cancer Council GP Education Team at gp@cancerwa.asn.au

SAFETY PEN - Safe, feasible and effective transitioning of allergy assessment for penicillins to community care



SAFETY-PEN project at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital (SCGH) is piloting a GP-led service for testing and delabelling low-risk penicillin allergies with an oral challenge in your general practice. This initiative seeks to provide a safe, practical, and cost-effective alternative to the conventional model, serving communities both in metropolitan and remote areas of Western Australia.

Penicillin is the cornerstone of antibiotic therapy but is frequently underused due to the reported allergies that affect about 10 per cent of the population. Surprisingly, research reveals that over 90 per cent of these reported allergies are inaccurately diagnosed.

This mislabelling often leads to the use of alternative antibiotics, which can be less effective, more costly, and increase the risk of antibiotic resistance. Patients burdened with incorrect antibiotic allergy labels experience poorer health outcomes and increased economic costs. This may also increase consultation times with doctors while second-line antibiotics are sought, along with severe shortages of the commonly used alternatives.

Traditionally, allergy assessments and delabelling have been conducted in outpatient clinics within tertiary hospitals, which are not readily accessible to everyone, particularly those in rural and remote areas. Our current systems are overstretched, resulting in extended wait times and prioritisation of only urgent or high-risk cases.

There is also a lack of studies on the feasibility and effectiveness of conducting these assessments in community settings despite research widely proving non-allergy specialists can safely delabel low-risk penicillin allergy labels via a direct oral challenge with a very low rate of adverse events.

We are inviting general practices to participate in this pilot program to collaborate with hospital specialists to address and resolve false low-risk penicillin allergy labels.

Participating health professionals will receive education and training, enabling them to collaborate within a shared care system with direct access to the SCGH Immunology department.

Educational materials are being developed in conjunction with the RACGP and will be designed to count towards CPD learning and audit requirements.

After the training, you will be equipped to assess low-risk penicillin allergy labels using a standardised protocol. Compensation will be provided for the time you dedicate to this study.

By joining us, you will play a crucial role in reducing the community burden of inappropriate penicillin allergy labels, simplifying patient care, and mitigating the long-term health and economic impacts associated with mislabeled allergies.

For more information or to express interest in participating, contact Dr Rishabh Kulkarni Immunology Service Registrar, SCGH via rish.kulkarni@research.uwa.edu.au or phone 0410755076.

See pg.7 for
upcoming
education events
or visit our
[online event
calendar](#)



First national survey shows that most Australians know little about dementia

Most Australians agree they would adopt a healthier lifestyle if they knew more about ways to reduce their risk of developing dementia. However, only one in three Australians feel confident in their knowledge of how to reduce their risk.

Results from the [Dementia Awareness Survey](#), conducted between July and August 2023, were released on 24 April by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The survey collected information on how much people know about dementia, their attitudes towards dementia and people living with dementia.

Results from this survey will help inform priorities and areas for dementia awareness initiatives and prevention activities that can reduce the risk or delay the development of dementia.

Access the full report on the [AIHW website](#).

RDA launches online rural incentive payment finder

Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) has launched a new tool to make it easier to find and apply for Australian Government funded rural incentive payments. The free RDAA Commonwealth Financial Support Calculator gives an estimate of the amounts GPs are eligible for according to Modified Monash Model area, style of work, and advanced skill.

Watch the [video demonstration](#) or access the calculator on the [RDAA website](#).

Co-occurring psychological distress and risky alcohol and other drug use in Aboriginal people

Researchers from the University of Newcastle have identified a range of potential risk and protective factors for co-occurring psychological distress, risky alcohol and/or substance use among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The study used data from the 2018-19 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS). The research was published in the Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry.

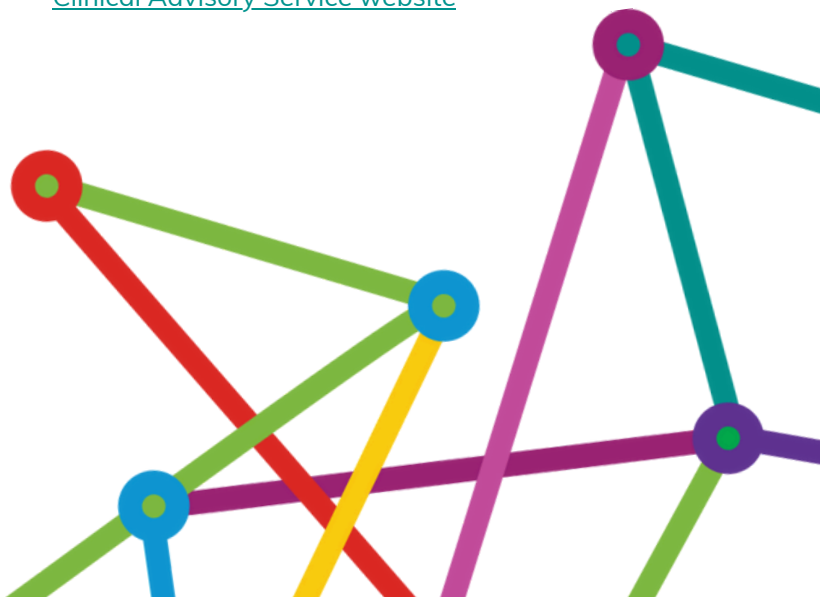
Read more at [Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet](#).

Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service

The Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service is a specialist telephone consultancy service that provides clinical advice to health professionals on all issues relating to patient management of alcohol and other drug use.

The service is provided by experienced addiction medicine specialists and is available at no charge to all health professionals in Western Australia.

Phone [\(08\) 6553 0520](#), 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday. If a call is received after hours, please leave a message and your call will be returned the next business day. For more information, please visit [Mental Health Commission - Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service website](#)



New app to support GPs in delivering palliative care

CareSearch, a government-funded National Palliative Care project, recently released the CareSearch app to support GPs in delivering palliative care. This free digital tool brings together guidance on terminal prescribing for specific symptoms and evidence-based information on key care issues.

Find our more and download the free app on the [CareSearch website](#).

Free online resources to support people caring for someone at the end of life

Caring for someone who is dying can be stressful and it is common for people to feel like they don't know what to do, what to say and how to cope. Funded by DHAC, Carehelp provides free online resources to support your patients who are caring for someone with a life-limiting illness.

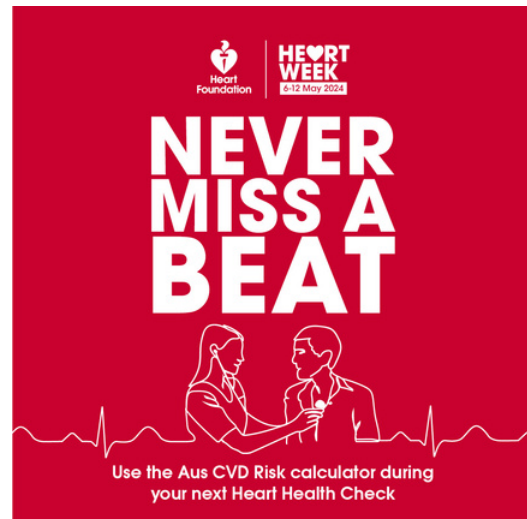
Access CarerHelp resources [here](#)

Contribute to the future direction of Genetic Health WA services

The WA Department of Health and Genetic Health WA (GHWA; formerly the Genetic Services of Western Australia) invite you to provide feedback on GHWA's draft inaugural service plan.

GHWA provides genetic counselling, genetic testing, and family planning support for people impacted by certain genetic conditions. GHWA's service plan aims to outline the future direction of the service and help to enhance the experience of those who use it. You can read the draft service plan and provide your feedback via a [short survey](#)

All responses will remain confidential and will only be used to inform the final service plan. The consultation period closes on 31 May 2024. Visit the [WA Department of Health website](#) to find out more about the project.



National Heart Week 6 to 12 May

During Heart Week, the Heart Foundation is encouraging GPs and other health professionals to never miss a beat, by using the [Aus CVD Risk calculator](#) to deliver more Heart Health Checks to their at-risk patients.

New updated CVD risk assessment and management templates aligned to the 2023 Guideline are available for download and use for primary health care professionals via the [Heart Week campaign page](#).

New AIHW report on people with disability in Australia

People with disability generally report poorer general health and higher levels of psychological distress than people without disability (AIHW 2024). People with disability also have higher rates of some modifiable health risk factors and behaviours, such as poor diet and tobacco smoking, than people without disability.

[People with disability in Australia](#) brings together information from a range of national data sources to contribute to a greater understanding of disability in Australia.

Read more about aspects of health for people with disability, from health status, and health risk factors and behaviours, to use of health services, and barriers to accessing health services on the [AIHW website](#).

GP Special Interest Panel – Care of Older People - Expression of Interest



Following review of the PHN Aged Care Program stakeholder engagement activities and anticipated further priorities, WAPHA is re-establishing a GP Special Interest Panel – Care of Older People.

The Panel will include a diverse group of GPs from across WA who can provide guidance and advice to inform the design and delivery of upcoming Primary Health Network - Aged Care Program activities, led by WAPHA.

We are calling for expressions of interest from GPs across WA who are passionate about aged care, have current experience and specialised knowledge of generalist palliative and end of life care, as well as expertise providing care to older people from our priority groups; and are available for ad-hoc consultations and engagement as required.

Our priority groups include older people:

- From lower income groups
- Living in rural and remote communities
- Who experience homelessness or are at risk of homelessness
- Who identify as Aboriginal or LGBTIQ+
- Born outside of Australia

To express your interest in joining this panel, please complete the [Expression of interest](#) by COB Wednesday 19 June.

ANZAED Eating Disorder Credential for GPs – Free to June 30 2024

Applications for the Australia & New Zealand Academy for Eating Disorders (ANZAED) Eating Disorder Credential are now open for GPs providing care for people with eating disorders.

Funded by the DHAC, expansion of the ANZAED Eating Disorder Credential to GPs aims to enhance the effectiveness and consistency of care for eating disorders in Australia. The Credential for GPs emphasises early identification and initial response for people with eating disorders, encompassing screening, assessment, diagnosis, and referral to appropriate treatment providers.

An additional aim of the credential is to grow the eating disorder workforce so people experiencing eating disorders can access the right care at the right time.

Watch the [GP information webinar](#) or find out more information Credential and application process at the [ANZAED connect.ed website](#).

Applications for the new ANZAED Eating Disorder Credential for GPs are free until 30 June 2024.

Applications open for WA Health Cancer Fellowships Program

The WA Cancer Fellowships Program (previously the WACPCN Cancer Fellowships) assists medical practitioners to expand their experience and skills that will ultimately lead to improved health outcomes for cancer patients in WA.

Applicants may apply for either the research or training stream by 1pm (AWST), 27 May 2024, through [MedJobsWA](#) (Reference No. 12106).

Late applications will not be accepted. Please ensure that all necessary approvals are obtained and the application form is completed before submitting. For further information, please refer to the [WA Cancer Fellowships website](#). For advice on submitting applications, please contact the WA Department of Health's Cancer Network by email at cancernetwork@health.wa.gov.au.

GP Education and Events

Online Black Dog Institute depression management and suicidality education courses supported by WA Primary Health Alliance .

Talking About Suicide in General Practice

Register for Talking About Suicide in General Practice, an online workshop that will help increase skills and confidence for GPs in recognising presentations where suicide risk is high, undertaking a detailed risk assessment, and management planning using a collaborative, team-based approach.

Find out more [here](#) or register for online sessions via the link below:

- [25 June 2024](#)
- [3 August 2024](#)
- [5 September 2024](#)
- [2 November 2024](#)

Dealing with Depression

Dealing with Depression is a highly interactive program that aims to provide GPs with a practical framework for diagnosing and managing depression. The program uses case based learning to explore key challenges GPs experience when caring for patients with depression.

Find out more [here](#) or register for online sessions via the link below:

- [17 May 2024](#)
- [17 August 2024](#)



Dealing with Depression in Rural Australia

Depression is a common condition frequently managed in primary care. Identifying and managing depression in a rural context presents a unique set of challenges for health professionals providing mental health care in their communities. Dealing with Depression in Rural Australia is developed specifically to address the needs of clinicians delivering health care for people presenting with depression in a rural setting.

Find out more [here](#) or register for online sessions via the link below:

- [7 October 2024](#)

Advanced Training in Suicide Prevention

This workshop aims to increase health professionals' skill and confidence in taking a detailed suicide history and developing a collaborative management plan to increase the safety of people planning suicide and reduce the risk of suicide. The workshop provides practical tools for health professionals managing the full spectrum of suicide risk presentations including the acute suicidal crisis, care after a suicide attempt and assisting families experiencing suicide bereavement.

Find out more [here](#) or register for online sessions via the link below:

- [5 June 2024](#)
- [27 July 2024](#)
- [9 October 2024](#)

Suicide Prevention General Practice Staff Workshop

With a 20-year history of suicide prevention support to the Australian community, Wesley LifeForce offers training that is developed from evidence-based expertise in the Australian community and with input from Australian GP's, general practice nurses and practice managers. These specialised programs are designed to equip you with leading methodologies and strategies in suicide prevention. Links to register for upcoming workshops below:

- [Esperance 28 May 2024](#)
- [Kalgoorlie 30 May 2024](#)
- [Armadale 13 June 2024](#)
- [Manjimup 18 June 2024](#)
- [Midland 19 June 2024](#)
- [Bunbury 19 June 2024](#)
- [Bunbury 20 June 2024](#)

WA Immunisation Schedule and Updates

Thursday 16 May | 5-6pm | Online

Immunisation remains one of the most successful and cost-effective advances in global public health, protecting against serious diseases. General practice plays an important role in encouraging patients to consider the benefits.

Join the fifth webinar in WAPHA's popular immunisation series and hear from Professor Paul Effler, Senior Medical Advisor, Communicable Disease Control Directorate at the WA Department of Health. In this session we will cover:

- Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) immunisation and the WA program.
- This year's influenza vaccine and program.
- The latest Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation. recommendations and how it affects general practice.
- Shingrix update

Find out more and register [here](#)

Paid GP training - The Initial Assessment and Referral Decision Support Tool guide to mental health referrals

Tuesday 14 May 2024 | 10.30am | ONLINE

The Initial Assessment and Referral Decision Support Tool (IAR-DST) helps general practitioners and clinicians to recommend the most appropriate level of care for a person seeking mental health support. It is designed to be used alongside a comprehensive, holistic mental health assessment to gather information and guide referrals. WAPHA is providing GPs in WA with paid IAR-DST training covering two workshops in one online session.

Find out more [here](#) or register for dates throughout May 2024.

*With the exception of GPs who are already being paid for their time by a Commonwealth funded service



Live demonstration

Learn how to integrate HealthPathways into your clinical practice - and maximise user experience

DATES THROUGHOUT 2024



WAPHA

HealthPathways WA
Clinical decision support

The HealthPathways WA team is providing three live demonstrations in 2024 facilitated by a GP Clinical Editor.

Learn key functionalities of the portal and how to access condition specific tools and resources, referral access criteria (where available), GPbook Specialist Directory and specialist regional rosters.

Find more information or register [here](#)



Peel Wound Care Workshop

Friday 7 June 2024 | 8.30am-4pm | The Sebel Mandurah

Join WAPHA, in partnership with Rural Health West, for a hands-on workshop on how to assess and manage chronic and acute wounds.

Presenter Dr Jenny Prentice has over 40 years' experience in nursing, stomal therapy and wound management in acute, community, private and aged care sectors in Australia and New Zealand.

Dressing selection, compression therapy and bandaging will be discussed.

Case studies will be utilised for discussion and provide participants the opportunity to 'touch, feel and apply' many of the dressing products currently in use.

Cost:

- \$55.00 - Peel primary care health professional
- \$100.00 - Primary care health professional working outside the Peel region

Reimbursement of registration fee is available for eligible participants through the Peel CPD Support Subsidy (CPDSS) grant. Download the application form [here](#)

Find out more and register [here](#)

RACGP CPR for GPs

Wednesday 12 June 2024 | 5pm-6pm | RACGP West Leederville | 2 RACGP CPD hours

Delivered in conjunction with Medical Training Solutions, this workshop is presented in accordance with the current guidelines of the Australian Resuscitation Council and covers all aspects of resuscitation and basic life support. It provides participants with topical emergency presentations and recent changes in emergency practice, tailored specifically for GPs.

Find out more and register for dates throughout 2024 at the [RACGP Faculty Events Page](#).

Supporting patients to achieve their wish to die at home: System supports and symptom control in palliative care

Tuesday 18 June 2024 | 6.15pm | The Hub, Bentley | 1.5 RACGP CPD Hours

Join Silverchain health care experts to learn how to prepare your patients and their families for palliative care, understand system supports and symptom control, what services and resources are available, and the best referral pathways.

Silver Chain Medical Director, Palliative Care WA, Dr Fiona Findlay, will lead the presentation and be supported by her experienced palliative team. They will share their knowledge and support you to work through different case studies during the session.

This free accredited session will provide GPs with 1.5 CPD hours (one-hour educational activity, 0.5 hours for reviewing performance) and includes a buffet dinner and refreshments.

Find out more and register [here](#) before 11 June 2024.

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