

Birthing in the bush

A website project to improve support to rural and remote practitioners offering maternity care has been developed by midwives at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) in partnership with the Council of Remote Area Nurses (CRANA).

Four different resources have been developed as part of this project: a resource library, an online communication forum, a website, and a primary health care guide, also available online.

PhD candidate Sue Kildea from UTS, herself an experienced midwife, worked with remote area practitioners, senior Aboriginal health worker Molly Wardaguga, and Aboriginal women to research the needs of remote practitioners and develop resources to provide them with education and support.

Ms Kildea said working with the Maningrida people from Arnhem Land for several years gave her insight into the needs of Aboriginal women in remote regions, and of the need to develop culturally appropriate

resources for the practitioners providing their health services.

'I was involved in a review of birthing services for women in the remote top end, and in talking with women from many communities, it became clear that women wanted greater choices, they wanted to give birth in their remote communities, and they wanted to see an increase in the use of cultural practices in regional settings,' Ms Kildea said.

The review also confirmed what Ms Kildea had suspected: that service providers had difficulties in accessing education and resources, and were often not well prepared to go and work in the cultural context in which they found themselves.

'Many of them had no cultural awareness training, and [the review] found that we are not listening to the women's voices very well, if at all, in some places,' Ms Kildea said.

Many women in remote areas are encouraged to give birth in



Assisting birthing business (left to right) Shirley Mininjarla, Elizabeth Mipalangok, Dixie Wurpamira, Molly Wardaguga, Sue Kildea and Mary Djabalag

hospital, Ms Kildea said, but this was not necessarily the most appropriate, or even the safest practice, for women or their babies.

With this in mind, she set about developing resources that would facilitate better birthing experiences for women and better support for those providing their care.

'I wanted to be able to support the practitioners better, but I also knew we weren't working very

well with community women – there is lots of talk these days about the importance of involving consumers in health care planning, but for the remote area midwife on the ground, it's difficult to know how to go about that,' Ms Kildea said.

The *Maternity Care in the Bush* resources and communication forum are available at the CRANA website at www.crana.org.au. *Birthing Business in the Bush* is available at www.liquidrain.com.au.

Civvies for kids

Following a three-month trial, nurses in the general medical ward at Sydney Children's Hospital in NSW have scrapped uniforms in order to create a more homelike environment.

Nurse educator Pippa Cameron who came up with the idea said: 'There's a lot of good nursing research that says children in hospital are frightened of nurses' uniforms. If nurses aren't in uniform, they're more relaxed, the families are more relaxed, and it's a more casual environment. Nurses love it as well. The difference in our relationship with the families is quite significant when we're not in uniform.'

- Southern Courier

Childhood immunisation update

The ANF has endorsed the revised edition of the *Understanding Childhood Immunisation (UCI)* booklet published by the Australian Government. The revised edition incorporates recent changes to the National Immunisation Program, *The Australian Immunisation Handbook* and the *Australian Standard Vaccination Schedule (ASVS)* and will be distributed through hospitals, general practitioners, immunisation clinics, childcare centres and the Immunisation Infoline. Additional copies can be obtained by contacting the Immunisation Infoline on 1800 671 811.

Aboriginal kids health study

The most comprehensive study of Aboriginal children's health has been completed in WA, with results confirming little progress has been made, and many problems begin in childhood.

The rate of ear infections among Indigenous children surveyed in WA was 18%, four times the level considered critical by the WHO. Many Indigenous children were affected by separation from their parents, with 6% of children under three years and 20% of teenagers being cared for by someone other than their parents.

The study is available at the Institute for Child Health Research website: www.ichr.uwa.edu.au.

News too violent for children

Health professionals should recognise the potentially harmful influence of television news and advise parents accordingly, research published in *Pediatrics* suggests. Traditionally, the debate about media violence and children has focused on entertainment programming, however study author, Dr Juliette van der Molen, said there was sufficient reason to assume violence in television news has the same impact as fictional violence, and suggested news content be included when educating parents about media violence and children.

Reference

van der Molen, J. *Violence and suffering in television news: Toward a broader conception of harmful television content for children*, *Pediatrics*, 2004, 113, pp.1771-75.

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