

Brisbane Cancer Walk to push Indigenous cancer into the spotlight

Tuesday, 28 January 2014

A walk in inner Brisbane will hope to raise cancer awareness among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and encourage its prevention, detection, and treatment.

The Musgrave Park Cancer Walk will be held on Sunday, 2 February 2014 as a precursor to World Cancer Day on 4 February 2014. The Walk aims to promote cancer awareness, the importance of early detection, the need for regular cancer checkups, and highlight options for cancer treatment and care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The walk is a joint initiative between the National Indigenous Cancer Action Network (NICaN), Menzies School of Health Research, the Aboriginal and Islander Community Health Service – Brisbane Ltd, Musgrave Park Family Fun Day, Cancer Council Queensland, QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute and Qld Aboriginal and Islander Health Council.

Menzies Senior Research Fellow, Gail Garvey said it was fitting for the inaugural walk to coincide with this year's World Cancer Day theme, 'Debunk the myths'.

"Until recently cancer has been a low priority on the Indigenous health agenda, despite the disease being the second leading cause of death among Indigenous people and accounting for a greater number of deaths each year than diabetes and kidney disease," she said.

"There is a clear need to improve health services for people with cancer by utilising the information we do have and by identifying knowledge gaps.

"The Musgrave Park Cancer Walk is a wonderful initiative because it will raise awareness amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that is desperately needed."

Indigenous cancer survivor Mrs Adelaide Saylor, who was born in Babinda, North Queensland, and lives in Brisbane, echoed Assoc Prof Garvey's comments by reiterating the clear lack of "open discussion and general awareness about cancer".

"I had breast cancer two years ago and the only reason I got checked was because my husband forced me to go to an appointment. I was lucky because the tumour was only the size of a grain of rice and I recovered after chemotherapy," Mrs Saylor said.

"I didn't know much about cancer because it was never spoken about with our mob even though four of my aunties were diagnosed with cancer – two with bowel cancer; one with cervical cancer; and one with breast cancer."

Cancer Council Queensland spokesperson, Katie Clift said Indigenous Australians were at greater risk of receiving a cancer diagnosis and 50 per cent more likely to die from cancer than non-Indigenous Australians.

"The burden of cancer on the Indigenous population is significant and culturally appropriate preventive strategies, developed through partnership and collaboration with Indigenous people, are key to reducing cancer incidence and, or risk," Ms Clift said.

"There is an urgent need for closer collaboration between health agencies and Indigenous communities.

"Early diagnosis and effective treatment are essential to improve cancer survival rates."

The Musgrave Park Cancer Walk will bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together to acknowledge community members and their families who have been affected by cancer. It aims to encourage discussion about cancer among Indigenous Australians, and build awareness of the availability of cancer services, treatments and care options, as well as ways to prevent and detect cancer early.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members have significant challenges regarding cancer including:

- Cancer survival is lower for Indigenous Australians than it is for non-Indigenous Australians. It is the second leading cause of death among Indigenous people, accounting for a greater number of deaths each year than diabetes and kidney disease
- The death rate for all cancers combined and for most individual cancers is significantly higher for Indigenous than other Australians: e.g. cervical cancer (4.4 times), lung cancer (1.8), pancreatic cancer (1.3) and breast cancer in females (1.3)
- Indigenous Australians have a much lower incidence of some cancers compared to other Australians (breast, prostate, testicular, colorectal and brain cancer, melanoma of skin, lymphoma and leukaemia) but they have a much higher incidence of others (lung and other smoking-related cancers, cervix, uterus and liver cancer).
- Cervical cancer incidence rate is almost three times as higher for Indigenous Australians as for non-Indigenous Australians (18 and 7 per 100,000 respectively).
- Incidence rates of lung cancer are significantly higher for Indigenous Australians than for non-Indigenous Australians (1.9 times)

The Musgrave Park Cancer Walk will include cancer survivors sharing their stories, a structured walk around Musgrave Park with participants divided by age and ability level, information and displays from cancer and Indigenous health organizations, prize raffles for participants, a range of free activities, including entertainment, children's activities as well as food, water and soft drinks and sausage sizzle will be provided.

The inaugural Musgrave Park Cancer Walk will be held from 3pm to 5pm on Sunday, 2 February 2014. All are welcome.

Media contact:

Photos are attached below. For interviews contact: Brian.Arley@menzies.edu.au; 0422 763 882.

Media note

Indigenous breast cancer survivor Adelaide Saylor is available for pre and post event interviews. A high resolution photo of Mrs Saylor is available on request. The photo available is below in low resolution.

Media contact

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Facts about Indigenous cancer

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National Indigenous Cancer Network background

The National Indigenous Cancer Network (NICaN) encourages and supports collaboration in Indigenous cancer research and the delivery of services to Indigenous people with cancer, including carers and families. NICaN is a partnership between Menzies School of Health Research, the Australian Indigenous Health/InfoNet, the Lowitja Institute, Cancer Council Australia and Indigenous audiences, consumers, researchers and health professionals from a broad range of disciplines, service providers, private sector and government organisations.

Menzies background

Menzies School of Health Research is Australia's only Medical Research Institute dedicated to improving Indigenous health and wellbeing. We have a 28-year history of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies works at the frontline, partnering with over 60 Indigenous communities across Northern and Central Australia. We collaborate to create resources, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.

For more information visit <http://www.NICaN.org.au>
For more background read: www.menzies.edu.au

Musgrave Park Cancer Walk – Photo

The below photos are available in high resolution, please email:
NICAN@org.au



Caption: Mrs Adelaide Saylor speaking at the launch of the National Indigenous Cancer Action network (NICaN) on February 4 2013 in Sydney



Caption: Assoc Prof Gail Garvey and Mrs Adelaide Saylor at the launch of the National Indigenous Cancer Action network (NICaN) on February 4 2013 in Sydney