

Improving knowledge and understanding of asthma for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families online

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Learning about asthma has just become a lot easier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and health practitioners thanks to a new interactive app.

The app, produced by the Menzies School of Health Research's (Menzies) Child Health Division, uses interactive images, audio and quizzes to teach people about asthma and is available in eight different languages used in northern and central Australia.

In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are three times more likely to die from asthma and have poor clinical outcomes. Health education that is culturally appropriate is important to reduce language and context barriers to health equity.

Menzies senior research fellow and project lead Dr Gabrielle McCallum says the asthma app is an innovative way to help people access important information about asthma in their home and at their own pace.

"The team evaluated the app with 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers from the Northern Territory and Queensland and found that knowledge of asthma significantly improved after using the asthma app, particularly how asthma is treated and the steps in first aid," Dr McCallum said.

"Health care professionals also described the app as an innovative and effective method of providing asthma education to culturally and linguistically diverse groups."

CEO of Asthma Australia Michele Goldman said a core focus of their research program was to support projects that translate into real outcomes for people with asthma.

"We are very proud to be a partner in this app. It is evidence-based and tailored in a meaningful way to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to live better with their asthma. It will deliver better outcomes for people and that's what we strive to achieve," she said.

Larrakia Elder and Chair of the Menzies Child Health Indigenous Reference Group, Aunty Bilawara Lee says the app is even more important for families during the coronavirus pandemic.

"Getting information about how to keep asthma in check out to community is very important right now. The threat of coronavirus means that good lung health is critical in preventing a disaster from happening," Aunty Bilawara Lee said.

The asthma app is the first of a suite of respiratory-health educational apps called "*Lung Health for Kids*". Other apps to be released in the near future include bronchiolitis, pneumonia and chronic suppurative lung disease/bronchiectasis. The app is available on both Google Play and the Apple Store.

Languages included in the app include English, Tiwi, Murrinh Patha, Yolngu Matha, Kriol, Ptijantatjara, Western Arrernte and Warlpiri. For those interested in having their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language included, contact the asthma app team via email cre.indigenous.lung@menzies.edu.au.

Funding for the development of the app was provided by Asthma Australia, The Centre for Research Excellence in Respiratory Health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Queensland Health.

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Menzies School of Health Research

Menzies School of Health Research is one of Australia's leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and global and tropical health. Menzies has a history of over 30 years of scientific discovery and public health achievement. Menzies works at the frontline, joining with partners across the Asia-Pacific as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across northern and central Australia. Menzies collaborates to create new knowledge, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.