

What's app-ening with my lungs?

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Learning about healthy lungs has just become a lot easier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and health practitioners thanks to an expanded 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 various conditions affecting the lungs and is available in eight different languages used in northern and central Australia.

Originally released in 2020 with a focus on asthma, the app has been expanded to include other common childhood lung conditions such as bronchiolitis, pneumonia and bronchiectasis.

In Australia, the burden of ill health from acute and chronic lung diseases remains high among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 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 that the expanded app is an innovative way to help people access important health information about common lung conditions in their home and at their own pace.

"The team evaluated the app with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers and found that knowledge of lung health significantly improved after using the app, particularly how lung conditions are treated," Dr McCallum said.

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

Lung Foundation Australian CEO Mark Brooke welcomed the launch of the updated health app, adding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are significantly over-represented in lung disease statistics.

"Bronchiectasis in particular disproportionately affects Australian Indigenous children, so an informative, easy-to-use app to educate families and carers in vulnerable communities is a great initiative," he said.

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

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

The *Lung Health for Kids* app is freely available on both Google Play and the Apple Store.

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

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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.

Lung Foundation Australia

Lung Foundation Australia is the only charity and leading peak body of its kind in Australia that funds life-changing research and delivers support services that give hope to those affected. Since 1990, we have been working to ensure lung health is a priority for all, from promoting lung health and early diagnosis, advocating for policy change and research investment, raising awareness about the symptoms and prevalence of lung disease and championing equitable access to treatment and care.