

Intervention needed to reduce Type 2 Diabetes in young Indigenous Australians

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Researchers are calling for immediate action to reduce the risk of obesity and diabetes in Indigenous children and young people.

In an article published in the Medical Journal of Australia (MJA) today, researchers have identified childhood obesity and the increasing numbers of young people being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes as emerging public health issues.

Lead author Dr Angela Titmuss, paediatric endocrinologist at Royal Darwin Hospital and Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) PhD student, says in the MJA Perspective article that collaboration between communities, clinicians and researchers across Australia is needed to get an accurate picture of the numbers involved.

“Type 2 Diabetes is a particular concern as there is a global trend of increasing numbers of young people being diagnosed, there is limited data available in Australia but anecdotally numbers are rising rapidly amongst young Indigenous Australians.

“Childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes leads to other serious health issues such as kidney disease which then puts a huge burden on families, communities and health facilities. When it occurs at a young age, it is a much more aggressive disease than in older people.

“It is critical that we act now to prevent this emerging public health issue, with engagement of Indigenous communities in the design of interventions being crucial.

“A suite of interventions across the life course are required, targeting children and young people before they develop disease, particularly childhood obesity, as well as targeting their parents to prevent intergenerational transmission of metabolic risk” said Dr Titmuss.

Menzies HOT NORTH project is supporting this research through the Diabetes in Youth collaboration, a Northern Australia Tropical Disease Collaborative Research Program, funded by the NHMRC.

The MJA Article is available here <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2019/210/3/emerging-diabetes-and-metabolic-conditions-among-aboriginal-and-torres-strait>

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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 Indigenous, 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 Indigenous communities

across northern and central Australia. Menzies collaborates to create new knowledge, grow local skills and find enduring solutions to problems that matter.