

13 August 2019

First Aboriginal Australian Dermatologist to Attend Skin Health Symposium in Darwin

This week Larrakia woman, Dr Dana Slape, Australia's first Aboriginal dermatologist, is back home to country to attend the Skin Health Symposium at the Michael Long Learning and Leadership Centre where experts from around Australia will discuss approaches to improving the skin health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations of northern Australia.

Skin infections cause significant illness in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, with scabies and streptococcal pyoderma being the most important. Speaking on the issue of skin health for people living in the north of Australia, Dr Slape expressed the severity of the problem and said skin infections in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can often contribute to more severe diseases and can often impact parents and children in other ways.

“Skin disease in Indigenous Australians is a national catastrophe. The extent, reach, severity, and complexity of skin disease cannot be understated. Skin infections, when not properly diagnosed and managed, can lead to diseases such as rheumatic heart disease and renal disease and can result in repeated episodes of school absence for children and time off work for carers.

“Meetings such as this allow the most experienced clinicians and greatest advocates for equitable health outcomes to come together to address how we can work together to improve health outcomes for those who need it most: our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community who suffer with disproportionate and dire consequences of preventable skin disease,” said Dr Slape.

The skin health symposium is an activity of HOT NORTH, which is a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funded research program led by the Menzies School of Health Research.

It will bring together biological, sociological, environmental and health service research expertise across tropical Australia and regional neighbours to discuss skin health.

The non-profit organisation, One Disease is funding Dr Slape to attend the symposium.

“We are delighted to support the attendance of Dr Dana Slape, and a number of other Indigenous attendees from across the Northern Territory at the symposium. It is essential they are present to discuss skin health issues that pertain to their communities,” said Michelle Dowden, CEO, One Disease.

As a collaboration between HOT NORTH and One Disease, the skin health symposium is taking place on 14 August.

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Interview Opportunities:

Dr Dana Slape (available Wednesday 14 August)

Michelle Dowden – CEO of One Disease (available 13 -14 August)

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