

Grant to help local young women with breast cancer

The Northern Rivers Division of General Practice has been awarded \$10,000 to implement a program aimed at empowering younger women with breast cancer in the Northern Rivers area.

"Women under 40 years often experience greater emotional distress than older women when diagnosed with breast cancer," Sara Hurren, the cancer coordinator at the division, said.

"Not only do they fear the prospect of early death, but the main treatments for breast cancer – surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy and hormone therapy – can also have a major impact on a young woman's body image, sexuality and fertility, some of them permanently.

"This program aims to develop local support networks to exchange information and meet the supportive needs of younger women with breast cancer in the Northern Rivers area."

The Empowering Young Women with Breast Cancer (eYWbc) program will be launched with an information workshop on October 13 that will address the major issues young women with breast cancer face in rural areas. The day will also be filmed for a DVD that will be available to young women newly diagnosed.

Around 11,300 women are diagnosed with breast cancer each year in Australia. Thirty per cent of these women live in rural and remote areas where access to quality care can be difficult.

The Northern Rivers program was one of two programs selected from 24 applications from community groups and health providers around Australia with pioneer-

ing ideas about how to improve access to health and support services for women with breast cancer in their local community.

The seeding grants are administered by the National Breast Cancer Centre and are part of the Polo Ralph Lauren Pink Pony initiative.

The National Breast Cancer Centre works with women, health professionals, cancer organisations, researchers and governments to improve health outcomes for women with breast and ovarian cancer. The National Breast Cancer Centre is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. For more information visit www.breasthealth.com.au.

Women under 45 years who have been diagnosed with breast cancer and their partners are invited to attend the information workshop in the Ballina Beach Resort on Wednesday 13 October. For more details or to register, please phone Sara Hurren on 6622 4453.

Mobile libraries take on guide to building healthy communities



Evans GP, Dr Paul Watterston, presents one of the guides to Building Healthy Communities to Lismore head librarian, Lucy Kinsley, for the mobile library.

A community-led health project in Evans Head has contributed to the development of a guide for small rural communities on how to set up their own programs to benefit the health of their communities.

Evans Head was one of 30 pilot sites established under the federally funded Rural Chronic Disease Initiative in 2002 to develop local models for implementing chronic disease and injury prevention programs in small rural communities. The initiative aimed to address the health problems facing rural, regional and remote communities with populations under 10,000.

The Evans community formed the Integrated Community Action Network (ICAN) to improve health and fitness levels in the community under the auspices of the Northern Rivers Division of General Practice.

From the experiences of this and other pilot projects, the government developed the RCDI Building Healthy Communities Guide. The resource kit is a 'how to' guide for communities wishing to implement similar projects in their area and provides a range of

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For parents with children from newborn to around one year of age who are having difficulties, or require further support with feeding (breast, weaning, bottle, solids); unsettled behaviour and related sleeping patterns; adjustment to parenthood issues for the family; postnatal distress; or parentcraft issues.

**FOR A REFERRAL
SEE YOUR GP, OR CHILD & FAMILY HEALTH NURSE.**

Meningococcal C funding extended

The Commonwealth has extended the funding for meningococcal C vaccine for 1-5 year olds until the end of June 2005. The vaccine is available at GP practices and community vaccination health centres. The Northern Rivers Division of General Practice is advising parents and guardians to vaccinate their children in this age group before June. After June the vaccine will only be funded for 1 year olds.

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Mobile libraries take on guide to building healthy communities

tools to help with project development, implementation and evaluation.

The division has just presented three of these guides to the Richmond-Tweed and Richmond-Upper Clarence regional libraries. They will be circulated around the region through the mobile libraries.

"The kit is packed with useful information and ideas for small communities that would like to try to address their local health issues," Evans GP Dr Paul Watterston, who was involved with the ICAN project, said.

For example, ICAN established local walking groups and developed a mud map of walks in the area, ran cooking and budgeting classes and CPR training, and lobbied council to erect a community noticeboard on the main street. It also ran successful health screening days during the project.

Although the guide focuses on chronic disease and health issues, it also has a broader application in terms of general project management of community led projects. It is suitable for community organisations, volunteer groups, health services and project workers who are considering setting up a community driven project.



SPIKE SAYS

"Vax'em"

www.vaccination.org.au

GP visit a good start in the battle against obesity

This year's Family Doctor Week, held in July, focused on obesity. Local GP and executive director of the Northern Rivers Division of General Practice, Dr Andrew Binns, said that GPs were well placed to help their patients lose weight.

Dr Binns, who has a particular interest in overweight and obesity issues, works hard to practice what he preaches to keep his own weight under control.

"I am careful with what I eat and have an exercise regime that I really enjoy and I think that's the secret. Exercise need not be a chore. Walking on the beach, cycling and walking to work are a natural part of my day to day routine."

tary. This has happened in a world where there is an over-abundance of readily available, high fat food. He has a few weight loss tips for all age groups.

Where possible, use every opportunity to walk to school, the bus, or to the shops instead of driving. Even remote controls, whilst great inventions, can remove an opportunity to burn calories.

Limit the time children, and you, spend in front of a television or a computer screen. Dr Binns says many studies have linked the number of hours watching television with childhood obesity.

As regards energy intake, Dr Binns says a whole family approach is needed



Dr Binns says lifestyle changes and making simple dietary changes can make all the difference in the fight against expanding waistlines. Not that it's always easy, he adds.

"We need to forget the model look and have achievable goals and accept that occasionally we'll blow it."

The latest figures to be released show that about 30% of young people between the ages of 2-18 years are overweight or obese. This is a dramatic increase over the last two decades and is a major health concern, according to Dr Binns.

"Preventing childhood obesity helps prevent many chronic diseases of adulthood. Overweight or obese youngsters are more likely to develop diabetes and heart disease at a younger age."

Dr Binns believes obesity is a social problem, with opportunities to be active being replaced by pressures to be seden-

rather than just one family member having to do something different. For example, breakfast provides an excellent opportunity to eat a filling, low fat meal that decreases the desire for high fat snacking later in the day.

Many low fat snacks can be made available for hungry children later in the day. Snacking in front of the TV should be discouraged and shopping needs to factor in the need for healthy grazing.

Use water to quench thirst and limit tastier sweet drinks for special occasions.

Sit down family meals help to manage the size of meals. Children need to set the levels of how much they eat and not be forced to finish everything on the plate.

"For those worried about their own, or their child's weight, a GP visit would be a great start in helping get on top of rising childhood and adult obesity levels," Dr Binns said.

FEEDBACK: We value your feedback. If you would like to make the division aware of any ideas for possible health projects, or if you have comments on any of our current projects, please call us on 6622 4453, or email media@nrdgp.org.au. Thank you.