

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH AND AGEING PORTFOLIO

Additional Estimates 2010-2011, 25 February 2011

Question: E11-083

OUTCOME 7: Hearing Services

Topic: RESEARCH DOLLARS LOOKING AT OTITIS MEDIA

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Senator Adams asked:

In relation to the conference report from the inaugural Australian otitis media group:

- a) Are there any research dollars looking at otitis media and the problems it concerns?
- b) Could you go through the programs that are applicable to that particular thing?

Answer:

- a) The Health and Ageing portfolio has funded and is funding a number of research projects relating to otitis media and its impacts.
- b) The applicable programs are listed below.

NATIONAL HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

The National Health and Medical Research Council has funded a number of otitis media research projects. Projects funded since 2000 are summarised in the below table.

**SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE: OTITIS MEDIA
(GST Exclusive)**

2000	\$	486,345		5 grants
2001	\$	1,171,160		7 grants
2002	\$	983,135		9 grants
2003	\$	1,771,826		9 grants
2004	\$	1,134,236		8 grants
2005	\$	985,831		7 grants
2006	\$	1,386,977		10 grants
2007	\$	1,494,939		11 grants
2008	\$	1,750,498		15 grants
2009	\$	1,811,677		11 grants
2010	\$	2,688,588		10 grants
TOTAL	\$	15,665,212	As at December 2010	
2011	\$	1,301,225	Forward Commitment	4 grants
2012	\$	1,139,567	Forward Commitment	2 grants
2013	\$	795,377	Forward Commitment	1 grant
TOTAL	\$	18,901,381	Including out years	

Additional details are provided below for National Health and Medical Research Council grants that are or were active from 2010 onwards.

Associate Professor Jonathan C Craig of the University of Sydney

The University of Sydney has been funded \$2,043,111 from 2006 to 2010 to conduct a study of the impact of environment on Aboriginal resilience and child health.

Dr Peter S Morris of the Menzies School of Health Research

The Menzies School of Health Research has been funded \$1,357,461 from 2007 to 2010 to study “Azithromycin versus placebo in the treatment of asymptomatic acute otitis media in young Aboriginal children: A RCT”. This is a study examining the benefits of antibiotics in Aboriginal children with asymptomatic ear infections.

Dr Naor H Bar-Zeev of the Menzies School of Health Research

The Menzies School of Health Research has been funded \$98,910 from 2007 to 2010 to study vaccination strategies to reduce ear disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Northern Territory.

Associate Professor Ross M Andrews of the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute

The Murdoch Childrens Research Institute has been funded \$282,008 from 2007 to 2010 to study the prevention of pneumococcal diseases, streptococcal disease and influenza among Indigenous populations.

Ms Robyn L Marsh of the Menzies School of Health Research

The Menzies School of Health Research has been funded \$82,095 from 2008 to 2011 to study the “Nasopharyngeal metagenomics in Indigenous children: correlations with otitis media aetiology and treatment failure”.

Associate Professor Cynthia B Whitchurch of Monash University

Monash University has been funded \$418,517 from 2008 to 2010 for a study of “Genetic dissection of biofilm development by non-typeable *Haemophilus influenzae*”. This is a genetic analysis of *Haemophilus influenzae* biofilm formation.

Professor Sandra J Eades of the University of Sydney

The University of Sydney has been funded \$445,618 from 2008 to 2010 to study the ear health, hearing, speech and language development in urban Aboriginal children.

Associate Professor Amanda J Leach of the Menzies School of Health Research

The Menzies School of Health Research has been funded \$779,865 from 2009 to 2011 for a community-based surveillance of bacterial respiratory pathogens in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. This research monitors changes in bacterial pathogens in specified communities.

Associate Professor Amanda J Leach of the Menzies School of Health Research

The Menzies School of Health Research has been funded \$2,924,540 from 2010 to 2013 for a study of “Single versus combination pneumococcal conjugate vaccines (13PCV and PHiD-CV) for high-risk Aboriginal children”. This study is examining if Aboriginal children should get both pneumococcal vaccines.

Professor Jenefer M Blackwell of the University of Western Australia

The University of Western Australia has been funded \$1,045,618 from 2010 to 2012 for a “Family Study of Ear Health and Metabolic Diseases in a Western Australian Aboriginal Community”. This is a study of ear infections and life-style related diseases.

HEARING LOSS PREVENTION PROGRAM

The Hearing Loss Prevention Program (HLPP) is funded by the Department of Health and Ageing to reduce the incidence of hearing loss in the community and its consequent impacts on productivity in Australia. In 2010-11 the HLPP is being administered by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

Dr Peter Morris of the Menzies School of Health Research

The Menzies School of Health Research has been funded \$1,093,279 (GST Inclusive) from 2008 to 2012 for a project to evaluate a case management support program for the prevention of hearing loss associated with otitis media with perforation in Indigenous children 0 to under 13 years of age.

The project has two main components, updating the “Clinical Care Guidelines on the management of otitis media in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations” and development of a case management support model. The original Clinical Care Guidelines on the management of otitis media in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations were developed in 2001. The case management support model will focus on the coverage and effectiveness of mobile phones as a health management tool. Mobile phones will be used to send proactive messages to children and their families and to exchange information with health workers.

Associate Professor Linnett Sanchez of Flinders University

Flinders University has been funded \$661,986 (GST Inclusive) from 2008 to 2012 to investigate whether the use of swimming pools by pre-school and school-age Indigenous children in remote communities results in a reduction and possible prevention of otitis media. This is a longitudinal study with high statistical power. It will significantly extend previous research into the effects of the use of swimming pools by Indigenous children in remote communities by incorporating measures of hearing (audiometry) and middle ear function (tympanometry) as the critical outcomes measures which are more directly linked to educational outcomes in these children.

Dr Damien Howard of Phoenix Consulting Inc, in collaboration with the Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

Phoenix Consulting has been funded \$326,000 (GST Inclusive) from 2009 to 2012 for a project that aims to prevent otitis media and consequent hearing loss in Indigenous Australians by enabling early childhood workers to instigate early treatment of Indigenous children with ear disease. Under the project, Indigenous families will be alerted to social indicators which suggest that children have middle ear disease and/or hearing loss. A complimentary aim of the project is to prevent Indigenous people's exposure to excessive noise levels. The project will develop a noise exposure profile for Indigenous lifestyles in urban, regional and remote areas, and design hearing health promotion resources for use with Indigenous communities.

Dr Warwick Williams of the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL)

NAL has been funded \$393,547 (GST Inclusive) from 2009 to 2012 for a project to develop a primary school based program to educate children with the aim of reducing their risk of hearing damage. A parallel, culturally appropriate hearing health program will be developed for Indigenous children, their families and communities. While this project does not have a specific otitis media focus, it does aim to encourage behaviours to assist young people to preserve their hearing health for life. This could result in a reduction in otitis media. It will utilise hearing loss prevention expertise with the expertise provided by an education officer.

COMMUNITY SERVICE OBLIGATION COMPONENT OF THE HEARING SERVICES PROGRAM

Professor Harvey Dillon of the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL)

NAL is planning a study to investigate whether otitis media in Indigenous children causes an excessively high prevalence of central auditory processing disorders in later childhood. NAL's recent research has indicated that approximately 50% of children with spatial processing disorder (a form of central processing disorders that NAL discovered a few years ago) had repeated bouts of otitis media in their infancy. NAL have therefore hypothesised that Indigenous children, who are known to have a high prevalence of otitis media, will have a high prevalence of spatial processing disorder. NAL plans to investigate this, and also assess the efficacy of the treatment that NAL has devised for spatial processing disorder. The study is planned to start in July 2011, run for approximately 18 months, and to cost approximately \$220,000 (GST Inclusive).

DEVELOPMENTAL RESEARCH TO INFORM INDIGENOUS EAR HEALTH SOCIAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

In November 2009, the Department of Health and Ageing commissioned a developmental research project to gain a greater understanding of ear health issues. The project will also inform the development of a social marketing strategy to increase awareness of ear disease, and to highlight the importance of seeking and following treatment to prevent hearing loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people(s).

The Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA), in partnership with GfK Blue Moon, Dr Judith Boswell from Adelaide Hearing Consultants, and The Echidna Group, was funded to undertake the project.

The research project identified a number of serious issues in regard to ear health in Indigenous communities, including widespread lack of information, low capacity of carers to act, and low service capacity to address these issues. The research also indicated that there is a strong desire among research participants to receive more information about ear health issues, particularly if the information is correctly targeted and culturally appropriate. The findings and recommendations of this research have informed the development of a national ear health education campaign targeting Indigenous people, under the *Improving Eye and Ear Health Services for Indigenous Australians for Better Education and Employment Outcomes measure*. The cost of this research was \$ 472,505 (GST Inclusive).

The research report has been released and is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/health-oatsih-pubs-eyehealth>