



Celebrating excellence in Quality Use of Medicine

MEDIA RELEASE

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Aboriginal health workers central to Award winning project

The *Good Medicines Better Health Pilot Project* to improve medicine-related healthcare received by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is the **winner** of the Community category of the National Quality Use of Medicines (QUM) Awards 2008.

Winners across the awarded categories – media and the sub-category of trade media; student, health organisation, community and poster – were announced at the biennial National Medicines Symposium 2008 dinner in Canberra last night. Senator the Hon Jan McLucas, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing, presented the Awards.

The National QUM Awards are an initiative of the National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS) and the Pharmaceutical Health And Rational use of Medicines (PHARM) Committee to recognise the QUM achievements of a variety of programs and activities.

Good Medicines Better Health trains Aboriginal health workers to become leaders in quality medicines use and related quality of care areas. It is the result of a partnership between the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia and the National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS).

The project provides senior Aboriginal health workers with the skills and knowledge to train their colleagues, who then counsel and support clients on managing their medicines, especially medicines for asthma, diabetes and hypertension.

The project also includes a support team and a user-friendly training package that features PowerPoint presentations, graphics, activities and assessments. Senior Aboriginal health workers reviewed and refined the development and implementation of the training package. Staff at three pilot sites are using the package: Port Lincoln in South Australia, Melbourne Victoria and in the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

The training strategy instils confidence in trainers to liaise with other health professionals and stakeholders on QUM issues at a national, workplace and community level. An evaluation report on the project will be prepared when the pilot phase ends next month (June 2008).

Both the winning and **Highly Commended** entry in the Community category employed a train-the-trainer approach. The Highly Commended *Seniors' Quality Use of Medicines National Peer Education Program* recruited and trained volunteer peer educators who are aged 50 years and over.

These senior peer educators then led other seniors through information about medicines in sessions which utilise interactive activities and encourage feedback and questions.

Information fact sheets and handouts are distributed and participants are encouraged to become active partners in their own health care by discussing issues around medicines with their doctor, pharmacist and other health professionals.

The program, a partnership between the Council of the Ageing (COTA) Partnership, COTA Alliance, and NPS, combined an understanding of the needs and interests of seniors in Australia with QUM expertise.

QUM is one of the central objectives of Australia's National Medicines Policy. QUM means selecting management options wisely, choosing suitable medicines if a medicine is considered necessary, and using medicines safely and effectively. The definition of QUM applies equally to decisions about medicine use by individuals and decisions that affect the health of the population.

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For further information or interviews, email ejames@nps.org.au or call Elayn James on (M) 0419 618 365.

National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS) is an independent, non-profit organisation for Quality Use of Medicines funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

ABN 61 082 034 393 | Level 7/418A Elizabeth Street Surry Hills 2010 | PO Box 1147 Strawberry Hills 2012
Phone: 02 8217 8700 | Fax: 02 9211 7578 | email: info@nps.org.au | web: www.nps.org.au