Programs for delivering a brighter future for the next generation

One of the concurrent sessions at the forthcoming 12th National Rural Health Conference will provide evidence from East Arnhem Land, South Australia and Tasmania of how, by working with teenage children and young adults, local programs can lay the foundation for better health in the next generation. Conference delegates will be able to develop recommendations about how such successful programs can be adopted and adapted to different settings.

The semi-structured Play2Grow playgroups operating in the Clare Valley Children’s Centre in rural South Australia have delivered positive outcomes for the families attending. Run by the Clare Healthy Families Team and the Clare Medical Centre, Play2Grow’s primary purpose is to assist young families – especially those with complex needs – to engage with early intervention services. In their presentation *Deconstructing the barriers to engage families with complex needs in early intervention services*, Katrina Wilkop and Christy Clothier will describe improved developmental outcomes, introductions to child care and other community supports and growth in parent confidence.

Team sports are often promoted for the benefits they bring to participants, and a recent program in the Northern Territory has focused on the value that can be added to the local netball competition. Kevin Bird’s presentation, *Team sport as a catalyst for Yolngu girls’ participation in healthy behaviours*, will describe the Miwatj Health Healthy Lifestyle Program which allowed girls aged 12-16 to earn their place on a sporting and cultural trip to Sydney by meeting various criteria, including weekly visits to a drop in centre, visits to healthy lifestyle clinics, regular high school attendance and participation in the town netball competition. In September 2012, 15 teenage girls travelled to Sydney for six days during which they attended netball workshops, toured sporting facilities and visited the Bangarra Dance Theatre. This was the first time girls from East Arnhem had taken part in a group excursion, whereas local boys often travel away on group sporting trips. The girls’ trip, which was part of a holistic healthy lifestyles program, differed from the boys’, which focus almost solely on sport and competition. The presentation will describe the noticeable positive effect on the girls’ self-confidence and some of the future challenges for the program.

Another presentation in the same session, *Yarning On: making a difference to the health of young Aboriginal people*, will describe two South Australian programs that address issues of teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and low birth weight babies. The authors, Susan Arwen and Bianca Mark, explain the lessons and the early evaluation findings of the Yarning On model.

The Core of Life program is a culturally inclusive life-education program that will be described in a presentation by Christine Goonan and Anne Sweeney. Operating in Tasmania, which has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in Australia, Core of Life is designed for youth and focuses on the realities of pregnancy, birth, infant feeding and early parenting.

More information on the Conference can be found at [www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au)

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