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Australia

Two South Australian programs win awards for innovation in childhood immunisation

Two South Australian programs have been recognised for their innovation in childhood immunisation at the Public Health Association of Australia's 12th National Immunisation Conference in Adelaide.

Health Alliance, a general practice based in Magill, and the Mid North Division of Rural Medicine, based in Clare, each received a \$15,000 GlaxoSmithKline Childhood Immunisation Award for their program designed to improve coverage and/or timely delivery of childhood immunisation in their community.

Chair of the judging panel and former representative of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners on the National Immunisation Committee, Dr Neil Hearnden, commended **Health Alliance** for their ability to identify a weakness and work together to overcome it.

"By working together as a team, Health Alliance was able to identify effective solutions to overcome system deficiencies and increase local area immunisation rates to more than 90% among children aged between 12 months and four years.

"The changes were simple to implement and had swift results, with all members of the practice contributing to the success of the initiative.

"In addition, they've got a written plan in place for new people coming into the team to ensure this remains a sustainable project," he said.

Dr Anna Schettini of Health Alliance said: "It was pleasing to see that the team's dedication and the hope of improving the quality of care to the local community in general practice had been recognised.

"The surgery intends to use the GSK Childhood Immunisation Award to set up a nurse-led immunisation clinic," she said.

Dr Hearnden commended **Mid North Division of Rural Medicine** for their ability to improve immunisation coverage rates in their local community across a range of ages.

In 2008 Mid North Division introduced a 'Win a Trike' incentive which saw immunisation rates increase from 83.4% to 91.8% over a six month period. It was well received by the 15 practices within the Division and consistent communication between the Division and practices ensured resources and enthusiasm were maintained.

"They conducted a very good analysis of their situation, identified a specific deficiency, looked at what had worked in other programs before and used this understanding to enhance their own program," he said. "They also engaged with a range of groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities."

Christine Haydon, Immunisation Coordinator at the Mid North Division of Rural Medicine, is extremely pleased with the recognition of the service's work, noting that a lot of the credit should go to the service's nursing staff.

“The GSK Childhood Immunisation Award will be used to create public awareness about timely four-year-old immunisations, thus improving the immunisation rates overall,” said Ms Haydon.

Established in 2006, the GSK Childhood Immunisation Awards have been developed to reward innovation and share best practice in improving coverage or timely delivery of childhood immunisation. Entrants are asked to submit an overview of an initiative implemented in their practice or organisation in the past two years and demonstrate the impact it has had on immunisation coverage rates in their local community.

The winning entries had posters of their entries displayed at the Public Health Association of Australia meeting in Adelaide this week.

The GSK Childhood Immunisation Awards will be open again for applications in 2012. The Awards are offered in alternate years to the GSK Adult Immunisation Grants.

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