

23 June 2009

Australian General Practice Network working to stop swine flu spreading

The death last Friday of an Indigenous man from swine flu related illness has highlighted the need to stop the spread of the virus through proper use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and pandemic planning in general practice says Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) chair Dr Emil Djakic.

Dr Djakic, a Tasmanian GP, said AGPN had begun training sessions across the country teaching general practice networks and General Practitioners (GPs) about pandemic preparedness, in partnership with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners which today (Tuesday) will be in South Australia.

The first training session was in Sydney last week with the rest of the country due to follow in the next two weeks.

The aim of the training is to teach GPs and other health professionals how to use PPE (face masks, gowns and other protective clothing) correctly when working with people who are suspect victims or who have swine flu and to develop pandemic plans for each practice.

"Correctly using personal protective equipment can go a long way in making sure that the health professionals we rely on to diagnose and treat swine flu don't contract the virus themselves and can continue to do the great job they have been doing keeping the community well," said Dr Djakic.

The training comes after the tragic death of a 26-year-old Indigenous man from the remote Kurrikurra community in Western Australia. It is believed that the man had been suffering from a range of other medical issues which put him at greater risk of suffering severe consequences from contracting the virus.

"We know Indigenous men have the worst health outcomes of any Australians, and this death is a sad reminder of that. However, the general practice networks around Australia are able to support general practice to cope with pandemic and this training will contribute to stopping the spread of this illness and preparing us for the next time pandemic hits Australia, which may be far more severe," said Dr Djakic.

Media are welcome to attend today's PPE training session in Adelaide

Where: Enterprise House, 136 Greenhill Road, Unley, Adelaide

When: 9.45am – 10.15am

Photo call: 1pm

General Practice South Australia CEO Gretchen Scinta will be available for comment from 9:45am-10:15am and a photo opportunity with people using the PPE will take place at 1:00pm. Please RSVP the contacts below if you would like to attend either or both of these events.

For media interviews please phone AGPN Communications Manager Frith Rayner on 02 6228 0819 or 0402 267 190 or Communications Officer Benjamin Graham on 02 6228 0828 or 0430 586 022.