



New approach to tackling liver disease

'Health Liver Campaign' to avoid more than 1,000 deaths each year

Patients attending selected drug and alcohol clinics will be offered non-invasive liver screening and peer-based counselling as part of a program to help prevent more than 1,000 Australian deaths each year from liver disease.

The Healthy Liver Campaign, implemented by The Kirby Institute (formerly the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research) at the University of New South Wales, aims to boost treatment rates through raising awareness of liver disease. It will be trialled in five drug and alcohol clinics across NSW over the next three years.

The program is funded through a \$360,000 grant from pharmaceutical company MSD.

Liver disease and liver failure represent a significant health burden, killing more than 1,000 Australians each year. However, with early detection and treatment, many deaths could be avoided.

"Chronic liver disease is a common problem among people with opiate drug dependency, but these people often have limited access to screening and other services essential for liver health," notes project leader and program head of the Viral Hepatitis Clinical Research Program at the Kirby Institute, Professor Greg Dore.

"With this grant, the Kirby Institute can pilot a new approach to improving liver health in patients that receive opiate pharmacotherapy," Professor Dore said.

Previously, a liver biopsy was needed to screen for liver disease; however the Health Liver Campaign will use a non invasive scan known as FibroScan to measure liver damage.

Managing Director of MSD, Australia & New Zealand Ms Jane Orr said: "MSD has a long history in working with doctors and patients to fight infectious disease. We believe this grant will lead to a better understanding of the best ways to combat liver disease, which imposes a high burden on public health in Australia."

The Healthy Liver Campaign's impact will be closely tracked and its results used to encourage new approaches to treating liver disease and to inform future policy on the provision of services and infrastructure, particularly for marginalised patient groups.

Clinics participating in the Healthy Liver Campaign

Regent House, Regent St Chippendale
Pharmacotherapy Services, Hunter region
Nepean Hospital Liver Clinic

Clinics involved in the development of campaign materials

Rankin Court, Darlinghurst
Kirketon Road Centre, Darlinghurst

About The Kirby Institute

The Kirby Institute for infection and immunity in society, formerly the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, fulfils a much broader role than was first imagined in 1986 when the three National Centres in HIV research were formed in response to the then-emerging HIV pandemic. Over time, the skills, techniques and expertise developed in the study of HIV has been applied to a range of other infectious diseases, notably viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections.

About MSD

Today's MSD is a global healthcare leader working to help the world be well. MSD is a trade name of Merck & Co., Inc., with headquarters in Whitehouse Station, N.J., U.S.A. Through our prescription medicines, vaccines, biologic therapies, and consumer care and animal health products, we work with customers and operate in more than 140 countries to deliver innovative health solutions. We also demonstrate our commitment to increasing access to healthcare through far-reaching policies, programs and partnerships. For more information, visit www.msd-australia.com.au.

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