

Practice Connect

Latest news and updates

In this edition:

- Wellbeing support at hand during stressful times for WA general practice teams
- Pfizer (Comirnaty) to begin rolling out to some GP practices from July 5
- COVID-19 and Flu Vaccination Timing
- COVID-19 vaccinations for pregnant women
- COVID-19 Vaccination Training Modules
- COVID-19 HealthPathways Updates
- New MBS item: In-Depth Patient Assessment for a COVID-19 Vaccine
- Updated: Guidance on the use of PPE
- 2021 NIP Influenza Vaccination Program message from Department of Health
- Influenza Vaccination Coverage 2021
- Acute Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease: Mandatory Reporting
- GPs at forefront of advance care planning
- CPD for General Practitioners
- Closing the Gap PBS Co-payment Program Changes
- Launch of the Manual of Resources in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention
- Veterans MATES: Tinnitus - help is available
- Young Onset Parkinson's Exchange (YOP-X) App and Website
- Practice Assist Resource Library
- Medicare Benefits Schedule Changes
- Health Promotions
- Education and training

Wellbeing support at hand during stressful times for WA general practice teams

GPs and practice staff are dealing with unprecedented levels of stress compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated challenges. To support GPs and practice staff, WAPHA has partnered with Access EAP to provide two webinars to assist with stress and burnout.

The first is called **Self-Care to Prevent Burnout** (30 minutes) and covers:

- Degrees of stress
- Signs of burnout
- The fine balance of wellbeing
- What is self-care?
- Creating a self-care plan
- Finding your calm
- Accessing further support and resources

Register [here](#).

The second is called **Managing Stress & Building Resilience** (25 minutes) and covers:

- How to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy stress
- The importance of self-awareness and recognising your own stress symptoms
- What it means to be resilient and how it can help you cope with stress
- Strategies to build resilience
- Accessing further support and resources

Register [here](#).

Both webinars can be accessed on-demand for a one-month period from **21 June to 22 July**.

For further support please visit the HealthPathways [General Practitioners' Pathway](#) (**username: connected password: healthcare**) which provides further information on services GPs can access for support, crisis, wellbeing and personal health issues.

Pfizer (Comirnaty) to begin rolling out to some GP practices from July 5

General practices are an integral partner in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program and on Friday 4 June, National Cabinet agreed to increase access to the COVID-19 vaccine Pfizer (Comirnaty).

Some general practices already participating in the Vaccination Program will begin offering the vaccine from early July in areas of need, based on vaccine supply and distribution.

These practices will also continue to administer the COVID-19 vaccine AstraZeneca to eligible individuals and ensure that individuals can access their second dose.

It is anticipated that all general practices participating in the program and who meet the Pfizer (Comirnaty) site requirements will be provided with the opportunity to administer Pfizer (Comirnaty) by October.

WAPHA will advise practices of when they will be invited to start as further information becomes available from the Australian Government Department of Health.

COVID-19 and Flu Vaccination Timing

ATAGI has updated its **advice** about the interval between COVID-19 vaccines and other vaccines (including the flu vaccine). The minimum interval between COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines including the influenza vaccine is now seven days but can be shortened in special circumstances.



COVID-19 vaccinations for pregnant women

Health experts recommend that pregnant women be offered the **Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine** at any stage in their pregnancy.

Pregnant women who receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine could also pass immunity on to their babies through antibodies and breast milk.

A **joint statement** from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) also advises that women who are trying to become pregnant do not need to delay receiving a vaccination.

Pregnant women are at a higher risk of being affected by COVID-19 than women who are not pregnant and are encouraged to discuss any questions about vaccination with their GP or health professional.

Pregnant women must meet the eligibility criteria to book a Pfizer vaccination.

COVID-19 Vaccination Training Modules Updated

Updates have occurred to the COVID-19 vaccination training program on Monday 21 June.

Module progress and completion have not been affected. You are expected to login and view the new information. A summary of the updates can be found in the announcement forum. All changes within the modules are identified by 'NEW' in red. You can log-in to the training modules [here](#).

COVID-19 HealthPathways Updates

The following content updates have now been published on the HealthPathways site:

COVID-19 Vaccination Procedure

Added new key links to Australian Department of Health:

- COVID-19 Vaccine – Advice for Vaccine Providers
- COVID-19 Vaccine – Clinical Considerations

COVID-19 Vaccination Information

Added new Clinical editor's note under Australian national guidance section for:

- New resources:
 - Infection Control Expert Group (ICEG)- Updated Recommendations to Protect Healthcare Workers from COVID-19 Infection.
 - Joint statement between RANZCOG and ATAGI about COVID-19 Vaccination for Pregnant Women.
- Recently updated GP resources:
 - The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG)- COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women.
 - [COVID-19 Vaccination: ATAGI Clinical Guidance on COVID-19 Vaccine in Australia in 2021 \(V.5\)](#)
- Recently updated Patient resources:
 - Weighing up the Potential Benefits Against Risk of Harm from COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca
 - [COVID-19 Vaccination: COVID-19 Vaccination Decision Guide for Women who are Pregnant, Breastfeeding, or Planning Pregnancy](#)

Recently Reviewed Pathways

- Emergency Contraception
- Contraceptive Implant
- Progestogen-only Pills (POPs)
- Falls Prevention



To access HealthPathways please email the HealthPathways team at healthpathways@wapha.org.au

New MBS item: In-Depth Patient Assessment for a COVID-19 Vaccine

From 18 June 2021, the Australian Government introduced two new MBS items (10660 and 10661) to support GPs and OMPs to provide in-depth clinical assessments of patients aged 50 years and over regarding patients' individual health risks and benefits associated with receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. Read the full MBS fact sheet [here](#).

Updated: Guidance on the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for health care workers in the context of COVID-19

This document provides guidance on the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The recommendations in this document were developed with advice from the National COVID-19 Clinical Evidence Taskforce Infection Prevention and Control Panel (IPC). Read in full [here](#).

2021 NIP Influenza Vaccination Program – message from Department of Health

Provider Update - 2021 NIP Influenza Vaccination Program

From 1 March 2021, it is mandatory for all influenza vaccinations to be reported to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR), in accordance with the [Australian Immunisation Register Amendment \(Reporting\) Rules 2021](#).

Recently the Australian Government Department of Health investigated an incident reported by a General Practice, where a high number of influenza vaccines with 2020 batch numbers were reported to the AIR as being administered in the 2021 influenza season. This resulted from incorrect batch numbers being reported to the AIR due to some clinical information software storing and/or auto-filling previously entered information.

It led to data entry errors when this old information was being used and not confirmed to be current prior to submission.

All Providers are reminded to:

- double check expiration dates of vaccines prior to administration
- dispose of out of date stock appropriately
- encourage all staff at your practice to double check that the information being reported to the AIR is correct prior to submitting it to AIR.

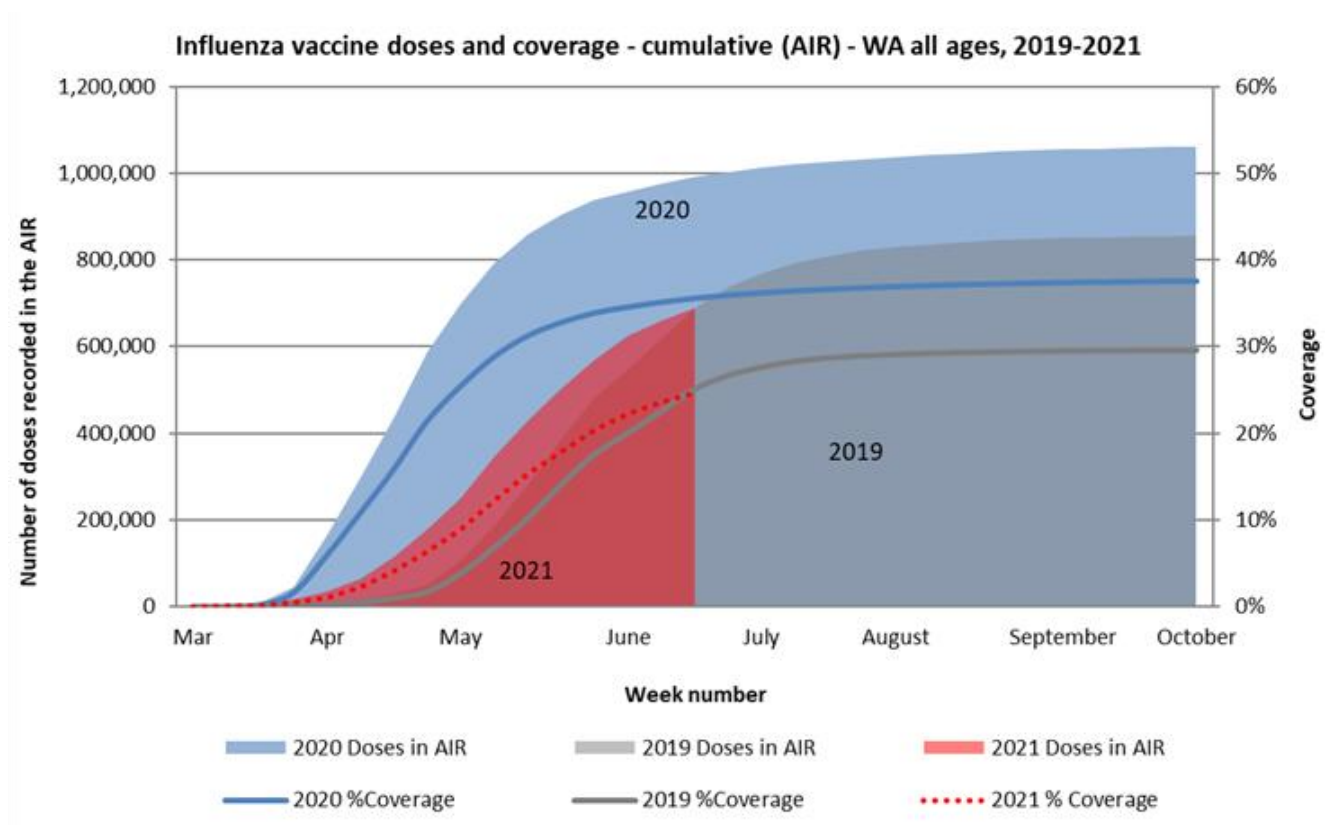
A factsheet outlining mandatory reporting obligations and helpful tips for reporting to the AIR is available [here](#).

A covering letter from the Australian Government Department of Health is available [here](#).

Influenza Vaccination Coverage 2021

Influenza vaccination coverage update as at 20 June 2021:

- 2021 state wide coverage is 24.6% and remains below 2020 levels but similar to 2019.
- Coverage for children aged >6 months to <5 years is 15.3%, coverage within this group was 44.8% at the same time last year.
- Coverage for children aged 5 <12 years is 11.5%, compared with 35.9% at the same time last year.
- Coverage for adults aged 65 years or older is 59.6%, coverage within this group was 66.5% at the same time last year.
- Coverage for Aboriginal persons is 13.2% compared with 33.1% at the same time last year.

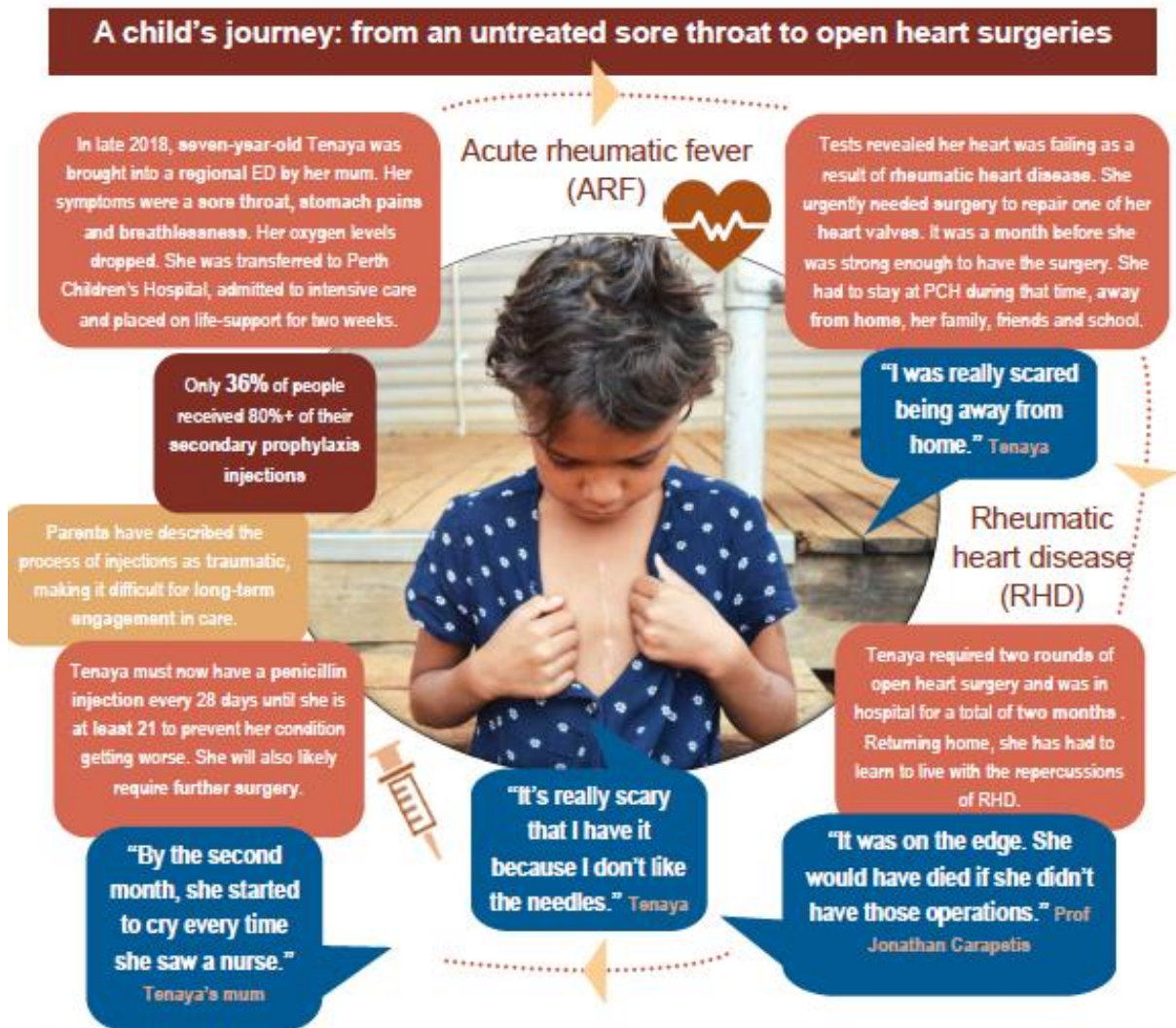


Data sourced from Australian Immunisation Register, prepared by Communicable Disease Control Directorate, WA Department of Health.

Acute Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease: Mandatory Reporting

Did you know that in WA we have the highest rate of patients who are detected with Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD, and no previous history of ARF)? What this means is that clinicians are not detecting ARF early enough and the ARF causes heart valve damage and leads to RHD. This is the point at which patients then need surgery.

Since 2015 it has been mandated by law that health professionals notify the WA Rheumatic Heart Disease Register when they suspect that a patient has, or is currently being treated for, ARF – both confirmed cases and probable cases of ARF (including recurrences) – or RHD.



The WA Rheumatic Heart Disease Register aims to improve detection, monitoring and management of ARF and the resultant condition RHD.

Reporting to the register is critical to understanding the burden of these diseases in WA. The data collected by the RHD Program is used to monitor and improve the treatment of ARF and RHD, access to medical specialists and diagnostic tests, and research into causes, prevention, treatment and screening. More information about reporting of ARF and RHA can be found on the WA Department of Health's [website](#) or our ARF pathway on [HealthPathwaysWA](#).

This is the second article in a series of three articles focusing on Acute Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease. You can read the previous articles on prevalence, diagnosis and treatment [here](#).

GPs at forefront of advance care planning

Primary care is set to play a larger role in advance care planning with the imminent implementation of the Voluntary Assisted Dying Act in Western Australia from 1 July 2021.

A recent [national study](#) found 70% of Australians aged 65 and over are missing the opportunity to consider their end of life care, and of those who do have advance care planning documentation in place, about 30% is incomplete, invalid or non-legally binding.

WA Primary Health Alliance Aged Care Senior Policy Advisor, Lisa Ryan, says this is where the enduring and trusting relationship between a GP and their patient is invaluable.

“A great time for this conversation to happen can be as part of a Health Assessment for people aged 75 and over, but it can, of course, happen at any time.”

“Patients will readily confide in and take advice from their family doctor, so it is vital to provide GPs with the necessary information and tools to support their patients to achieve their end of life goals.”

For support with clinical decision making, GPs can refer to the [Advance Care Planning Health Pathway](#) and related pathways.

To encourage increased uptake of advance care planning across Western Australia, WA Health is undertaking consultation on the development of a standardised format for the Advance Health Directive, a legally binding document that specifies the care a person would like in the future, including decisions about resuscitation, mechanically assisted ventilation and assisted nutrition and hydration.

More information on advance care planning for health professionals is available from:

- [WA Health](#)
- [RACGP](#)
- [End of Life Essentials](#)
- [Cancer Council WA](#)
- [Palliative Care WA](#)

For more information on advance care planning for patients, their families and carers visit the [WA Health website](#).

CPD for General Practitioners

NPS MedicineWise offer a wide range of free, accredited CPD activities for general practitioners to maintain best practice.

Browse the options online [here](#).

Choose an activity to suit clinical areas of interest within your practice and your preferred format – online, face-to-face or group discussion. Activities are accredited for RACGP QI&CPD program points and in the ACRRM PD program.



Closing the Gap PBS Co-payment Program Changes

Key changes being implemented to Closing the Gap (CTG) Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Co-Payment program from 1 July 2021 are:

- Any PBS prescriber can register eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for the Program if they are not already registered.
- PBS prescribers will no longer be legally required to write or electronically print 'CTG' on eligible PBS prescriptions for registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, annotation of a PBS script will help Community Pharmacies and Section 94 Approved Private Hospital pharmacists know that the patient is registered for the program, when dispensing the medicines.
- General Schedule PBS prescriptions issued by PBS prescribers within public hospitals will now be eligible for the Program, provided they are dispensed by a community pharmacy or Section 94 Approved Private Hospital pharmacy.

Find out more in the Australian Government Department of Health factsheet for [health professionals](#) or [Aboriginal patients](#).

Launch of the Manual of Resources in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention

The *Manual* is a collection of practical resources and tools that people, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous, can use to make a real difference in promoting positive mental health and social emotional wellbeing, and preventing suicide in our communities.

It responds to a need that many people have expressed: for simple guidance focused on positive actions that can be taken in a crisis or to address an ongoing issue.

The *Manual* is organised in three sections:

- For individuals, families, Elders and community members
- For clinicians and other front-line workers, both Indigenous and mainstream
- For community leaders and organisations.

Each section includes downloadable resources, checklists, online decision tools and best practice case studies that support users to respond positively and proportionately in whatever situation they face.

For further information on this resource please click [here](#).



MYSELF



MY FRIEND OR
FAMILY



MY COMMUNITY



MY CLIENT OR PATIENT



SUICIDE PREVENTION
FUNDING

Veterans MATES: Tinnitus - help is available

Tinnitus is among the top three most accepted conditions for Australian veterans. Not all veterans with tinnitus are bothered by it, but for about one in five, it substantially affects their physical and mental wellbeing.

Tinnitus is often associated with hearing loss, anxiety and depression, insomnia, poor concentration, hyperacusis (increased sensitivity to everyday sounds), and reduced social enjoyment, all of which impair daily functioning and quality of life. Some people report feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, hopeless and suicidal.

The Veterans' MATES Program is pleased to offer a range of educational materials to assist with supporting veterans and their healthcare providers.

- Veteran Brochure – [Taking on tinnitus – support is available](#)
- Therapeutic Brief – [Tinnitus: help is available](#)

For further information and copies of previous topic materials please visit the [Veterans Mates](#) website.

Young Onset Parkinson's Exchange (YOP-X) App and Website

Parkinson's Australia has launched the Young Onset Parkinson's Exchange (YOP-X) App and website as an information portal and resource hub supporting people with young onset Parkinson's, and provides a valuable workforce tool for GPs and other health professionals. Developed as a living lab model, the experiences, ideas, knowledge and daily needs of people with young onset Parkinson's have underpinned all App and website content, with more than one hundred individual stories and experiences shaping tools and resources. YOP-X also provides a fast track for people with young onset Parkinson's to collect and collate information relevant to their NDIS applications.

For more information on the YOP-X project and to access tools and resources, please visit www.youngonsetparkinsons.org.au or view the brochure [here](#).



Practice Assist Resource Library

As part of our support for general practices, Practice Assist maintains a library of useful resources in our [Practice Assist Resource Library](#). These resources range across different topics from GP Accreditation, Practice Incentives Program, to the latest in resources around COVID-19.

Here are some of our new and updated resources:

COVID-19 Resources

- [COVID-19 Checklist Preparing Patients for vaccination at a different location \(new\)](#)
- [COVID19 Vaccination for Nonparticipating practices \(new\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccination Planning Implementing a vaccination clinic checklist \(new\)](#)
- [MBS COVID-19 Vaccine Suitability Assessment Items \(new\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccination Checklist \(new\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Checker \(new\)](#)

Digital Health

- [How to access AIR through My Health Record and find a patient's immunisation history \(new\)](#)

Medicare

- [MBS Items for Medical Practitioners in 3GA Programs and MDRAP \(new\)](#)
- [Advance Care Planning \(ACP\) and supporting MBS items \(new\)](#)

If you have an idea for a new resource or feedback on our current resources, please email practiceassist@wapha.org.au with ideas and comments.

Medicare Benefits Schedule Changes

From 1 July 2021 there will be changes made to the MBS. While most of these changes apply to surgical items, the following may impact general practice.

Heart Health Assessment

Items 699 and 177 will be amended from 1 July 2021, with these services only applying to a patient who is 30 years old or older. This will align the items with the current evidence-based age cohorts for the Australian Absolute Cardiovascular Disease Risk calculator.

Indexation

Indexation is to be applied to most of the general medical services items, all diagnostic imaging services, except nuclear medicine imaging and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and two pathology items. The MBS indexation factor for 1 July 2021 is 0.9 per cent.

Further information on the indexation schedule for the MBS is available on the [here](#).

MBS XML files

The July 2021 Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) files, including an updated XML file, are available [here](#).

Updated Factsheets and MBS Quick guide will be available soon.

Health Promotion Events

Encourage your patients to get screened during Bowel Cancer awareness month

With June being Bowel Cancer Awareness Month, now is a great opportunity to remind your patients that Australia's second deadliest cancer is also the most treatable, if found early.

WA recorded a 44% participation rate in the [National Bowel Screening Program](#) in 2019 and general practice endorsement still remains one of the strongest motivational factors for people to participate in screening.

The Australian Government Department of Health acknowledges that practice nurses have an important role to play in encouraging and supporting patients to participate in the program through:

- Promoting the program in your practice
- Completing a screening audit of practice records
- Talking to your patients aged 49 to 74 about screening
- Sending a letter to 49-year-old patients to encourage participation in the program
- Finding out when patients will receive a kit and, if appropriate, encourage participation
- Showing patients how to use a bowel screening test kit
- Helping patients complete the participant forms
- Referring patients (of any age) with symptoms, bowel disease or family history of bowel disease to a GP
- Getting involved in Bowel Cancer Australia's [Bowel Cancer Awareness Month](#) each June



The Australian Primary Healthcare Nurses Association has worked with the Cancer Council WA to develop [resources and training](#) on the program for nurses.

GPs can find more information on the [Australian Government Department of Health website](#) or in the 'Screening and Surveillance Colonoscopy' HealthPathway.

Coming up soon...	
Infant Mental Health Awareness Week	June 23-27
World Scleroderma Day	June 29
Dry July	July 1-31
National Diabetes Week	July 14-20
National Wound Awareness Week	July 15-21
National Pain Week	July 22-28
Crazy Hair Day	July 26

Rural Health West 2021 Aboriginal Health Conference

Call for abstracts now open



The 2021 Aboriginal Health Conference will **celebrate** culture, strengths and **successes** in indigenous health – a time to **reflect** on achievements so far and how we can address the challenges. The conference will provide a space to **rejoice** and **reconnect** with colleagues after a challenging year in terms of environmental impacts and the COVID-19 pandemic.

All innovative projects, programs, research and initiatives will be considered, with the Conference Committee seeking:

- Interesting and thought-provoking **20-minute oral presentations**
- **E-poster presentations**
- Abstracts that are **action-oriented, strengths-based and solution-focused.**

Closing date for abstract submission is Monday 19 July.

For more information visit the conference [website](#) or contact the Rural Health West Events Team on 08 6389 4500.

5th Annual Immunisation Coalition Adult Immunisation Forum

The 5th Adult Immunisation Forum will take place on Monday 28th June 2021 and will be a virtual event due to the ongoing uncertainties with COVID restrictions.

This one-day event is free and will continue to build on the success of our previous forums, aiming:

- To better understand the burden of vaccine preventable diseases in adults
- To build an awareness of the challenges and strategies for improved vaccination in adults
- To hear the latest developments in vaccine programs for adults
- To consider ways of improving knowledge about immunisation best practice

The meeting will be of interest to health professionals, immunisation specialists, policy makers and anyone else working on the front line of public health.

Please note the times in your local area!! Western Australia (Perth): 6:15am - 3:00pm (4 sessions - 1.5 - 2 hour per session) [Register here.](#)

Education and training

Visit our Webinars & Workshops page at www.practiceassist.com.au for the events calendar.

Webinars & Workshops

Is it depression or adjustment disorder?
Presented by Mental Health Professionals Network
Thursday 24 June

Women's Health and Family Services - Community Information Sessions
Presented by Women's Health & Family Services
Joondalup – Wednesday 23 June
Northbridge – Friday 25 June

WA Foot Collaborative Annual Meeting
Presented by Diabetes WA
Saturday 26 June

Curing Hepatitis C in Primary Care
Presented by ASHM
Saturday 26 June

Annual Immunisation Coalition – Adult Immunisation Forum
Presented by Immunisation Coalition
Monday 28 June

CPD Event: Fondest Memories (Session 1)
Presented by WA Primary Health Alliance; HealthPathways
Tuesday 29 June

17th National Immunisation Conference 2021
Presented by Public Health Association
Tuesday 29 June & Thursday 1 July

South West Mental Health Forums - Bunbury, Collie & Manjimup
Presented by WAAHM
Monday 28, Tuesday 29 & Wednesday 30 June

RACGP Rural Member meet-up: GP self-care and mental health
Presented by RACGP
Tuesday 29 June

Expert Insights for Health Professionals - NAIDOC week
Presented by NAIDOC
Wednesday 30 June

Become a Rural GP: Choosing Advanced Rural Skills
Presented by RACGP
Wednesday 30 June

Motivational Interviewing in Primary Care: Improving lifestyle factors in the population one consultation at a time
Presented by RACGP & Ochre
Thursday 1 July

GP Rheumatology Roundup
Presented by Australian Rheumatology Association
Tuesday 3 August

The pathway to Fellowship for non-VR Doctors
Presented by RACGP
Monday 5 July

Rural and remote GP research
Presented by RACGP
Tuesday 13 July

MWGHPN Carnarvon Launch
Presented by Midwest – Gascoyne HPN
Wednesday 21 July

Collaborative Forum: End of Life and Palliative Care in Residential Aged Care
Presented by WA Department of Health
Wednesday 21 July

General Practice Conference & Exhibition (GPCE) Perth 2021
Presented by Reed Exhibitions
Saturday 24 & Sunday 25 July

Optimizing Care Series
Presented by ASHM
Saturday 31 July, 14 August & 28 August

Education and training

PATHFINDER: Early career GP conference 2021
Presented by RACGP
Saturday 7 August

Talking about suicide in General Practice
Presented by Black Dog Institute
Wednesday 11 August

Paediatric eczema, allergy and asthma update for Primary Care Nurses WA
Presented by Perth Children's Hospital
Saturday 21 August

Cervical Screening for nurses
Presented by Sexual Health Quarters (SHQ)
24 & 25 August

2021 Wound Management Workshops: Rural
Presented by Clinical Design Solutions
Multiple dates (rural WA)

Joint Australasian Sexual Health and HIV&AIDS Conferences: VIRTUAL
Presented by ASHM
Monday 6 to Thursday 9 September

Online Training
Foundations of Spirometry in Primary Health Care
Presented by APNA

GP Framework for Child Mental Health Assessment
Presented by Emerging Minds

Diabetes in Practice for Nurses
Presented by Diabetes Qualified

Electronic Prescribing online training
Presented by ADHA

RACGP webinar - Phone and Video consultations
Presented by RACGP

Safety Through Reporting
Presented by Department of Health & TGA

Keeping your practice COVID-safe
Presented by RACGP

High-quality health records to support patient care
Presented by RACGP

Medico-legal concerns and My Health Record
Presented by RACGP

Chronic Disease Management and Healthy Ageing online program
Presented by APNA

Get your practice ready for Women's Health Week this September

Held annually 6 to 10 September, Women's Health Week is the biggest week in Australia focusing on good health and wellbeing. It is a good opportunity to remind your female patients to make their health a priority and to take care of themselves.

Visit the [website](#) to download resources and find out how your practice can get involved.