



Community Advisory Committee Meeting 6/2018

Wednesday 12 December 2018, 6:00 – 8:00pm

Boardroom

Monash School of Rural Health

Latrobe Regional Hospital campus and by Zoom video conferencing

Meeting Notes

1. Welcome and Apologies

Chair:

Ms Carolyne Boothman

Community members:

Mr Geoff Duffell, Mr Shane Wilson

Organisational representatives:

Ms Chelsea Caple, Associate Professor Kate Moore

Ex Officio:

Professor Michael Abramson (Principle Investigator)

Hazelwood Health Study Personnel:

Dr Jill Blackman (Senior Project Manager), Associate Professor Yuming Guo (Hazelinks stream lead), Dr Shannon Melody (ELF researcher) and Ms Melissa Peppin (Administrative Officer)

Apologies:

Professor Judi Walker, Professor Charles Guest, Ms Tracie Lund, Mr Ron Ipsen, Ms Sharon Houlihan, Ms Vicki Hamilton OAM, Ms Ellen-Jane Browne, Cr Kellie O'Callaghan, Ms Ruth Churchill

2. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

No new member conflicts of interest were noted.

3. Dissemination of findings

3.1. Hazelinks: Ambulance attendances during the Hazelwood mine fire

Associate Professor Yuming Guo joined the meeting via videoconference for this item and provided an overview of the recently released Hazelinks report. The study aimed to investigate whether there was an increase in ambulance attendances during the mine fire period, compared to times before and after the mine fire. The report also aimed to determine whether those ambulance attendances were associated with changes in mine fire related air pollution levels.

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The analysis showed an overall 15% increase in ambulance attendances, and when investigating respiratory conditions separately, there was a 41% increase in ambulance attendances during the mine fire period compared to other times. Additionally, increases in pollution levels were followed by increases in ambulance attendances for respiratory conditions for approximately 5 days.

Committee members noted the important public health message emerging from this research. The committee noted that this research could be used as a resource for future emergency planning as the evidence means that more services should have been available at the time.

3.2. Overview of ELF analysis of state-wide perinatal data

Dr Shannon Melody joined the meeting via teleconference for this item and gave a brief overview of the findings. The research aimed to find out whether babies born to pregnant mothers exposed to mine fire smoke were born earlier or smaller compared to those born to mothers who were not exposed during pregnancy.

Smoke exposure was linked to birthweight in some babies, but only if the mother had a diagnosis of gestational diabetes. These babies were more likely to be heavier at birth by 107 grams compared to babies born to exposed mothers without gestational diabetes. This effect was in addition to the higher birthweight expected from gestational diabetes alone.

Dr Melody cautioned that it is difficult to determine when the mother developed gestational diabetes prior to, during or after exposure to PM_{2.5}. Future research will aim to answer this question.

3.3. Overview of Adult Survey Volume 2 Report

Dr Jill Blackman provided a confidential overview of the Adult Survey Volume 2. This research aimed to assess whether adults who were heavily exposed to air pollution from the mine fire had poorer psychological, respiratory or cardiovascular health, compared with adults who were less or minimally exposed. The full report and research summary will be released to the public in January 2019.

4. Study Status Report

Dr Blackman provided an overview of each stream of the HHS. A copy of this report was included with the meeting papers circulated to the CAC members prior to the meeting.

5. CAC Membership Recruitment

The Hazelwood Health Study is currently recruiting new members to join the Community Advisory Committee. At present, there are no community members from Sale on the committee. At the time of the meeting, only one application has been received. The committee discussed potential avenues for recruitment, and suggested extending the end date for applications to the end of January.

6. Annual CAC performance review

Members advised the committee that the annual CAC performance review will be emailed to committee members in the coming weeks. Members were encouraged to provide their honest feedback

7. CAC Terms of Reference

Members were encouraged to share their feedback on the current terms of reference for the CAC. The committee agreed to revisit this agenda item after the induction of new committee members, but noted that the emphasis to have up to four committee members from Sale should be restructured to instead encourage membership and participation from the wider Gippsland region.

8. Other Business

No other items were raised.

9. 2019 Meeting Dates

The committee was asked what day they prefer to meet in 2019. The committee agreed to meet again in February, and keep the meeting date as a Wednesday, but asked for this item to be added to the agenda once the new committee members are on boarded.

ENDORSED