



Press Release – National Indigenous Dialysis and Transplantation Conference

The National Indigenous Dialysis and Transplantation Conference (NIDTC), hosted by the National Indigenous Kidney Transplantation Taskforce (NIKTT) and the Transplantation Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ), is currently in full swing at the DoubleTree Hotel Alice Springs from 20 to 22 October 2019. Over the course of the three-day event, around 130 delegates from all over Australia are taking part in workshops to generate innovative approaches to tackling kidney disease inequities that affect Indigenous Australians.

Delegates have travelled from every state and territory and come from a diverse range of backgrounds. Indigenous kidney community representatives, nurses, kidney specialists, policymakers, primary care and allied health practitioners have all gathered to collaborate in the pursuit of a shared goal.

Showcasing these diverse voices will enable the community to learn from the health care sector and the health care sector to learn from the community. The identification of new shared priorities will be captured as part of a five-year National Indigenous Kidney Transplantation Strategy, which will be submitted to the Commonwealth for consideration in 2020.

On Monday, the NIDTC focussed on transplantation, featuring powerful presentations from Dr Chris Bourke, Australia's first Indigenous dentist and Strategic Programs Director of the Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association; Pat Turner AM, CEO of National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations; and community representatives who have received a kidney transplant (just to name a few!). Key themes comprised "addressing cultural biases in health services", "navigating the journey to transplantation", "enhancing pre-transplant coordination" and "establishing Indigenous reference groups".

On Tuesday the focus shifts to dialysis, with a line-up featuring local and interstate community representatives; Tony Usher, the CEO of Aboriginal Hostels Limited; and doctors, nurses and academics representing five states and territories. Key themes include "how do we deliver dialysis on country?", "models of dialysis provision", and "how do we create a good life in town?".

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people suffer very high rates of chronic kidney disease; their rates of dialysis across Australia are five times the non-Indigenous rate, and much higher in remote areas. Despite this, access to transplantation is much lower, with previous work demonstrating critical delays in the pathway to transplantation. These were the subject of a TSANZ Performance Report, which led to the funding of the NIKTT to address these issues.

This is a complex problem that cannot be solved by relying on one perspective. It will require input from all stakeholders, none more so than from the community who feel the impacts of this disease most keenly. The NIKTT and the TSANZ look forward to sharing learnings and outcomes from the NIDTC to instigate change where it's most needed.