



Australian Government

Department of Health and Aged Care

NACCHO



National Aboriginal Community
Controlled Health Organisation

Rheumatic Fever Strategy (RFS) Joint Advisory Committee (JAC)

Meeting 28 March 2023

Communiqué

Summary

The fourth meeting of the Rheumatic Fever Strategy (RFS) Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) was held on 28 March 2023. The meeting was chaired by Mr Ben Mudaliar, Assistant Secretary, First Nations Health Division, Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care (DoHAC), in the absence of co-chair Dr Dawn Casey, Deputy CEO of National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO).

The meeting covered several topics, including previous action items, the Terms of Reference, developing formal communication mechanisms, and presentations relating to national prevalence data and Queensland's Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) Strategy. Members also provided updates on recent developments in their respective jurisdictions/organisations.

Highlights

A national prevalence snapshot developed utilising data provided from RHD Control Programs on the current state of Acute Rheumatic Fever (ARF) and RHD in Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, and the Northern Territory was presented. The presentation outlined prevalence of disease across jurisdictions and highlighted the key aims of the RFS, such as preventing children from developing RHD and improving the quality of life for those living with ARF/RHD.

Queensland's presentation detailed Queensland's approach to ARF and RHD prevention, management, and treatment activities. It focused on several key areas including consolidating core business, elevating primordial prevention efforts, training First Nations health practitioners, developing partnerships for skin health initiatives, and creating a monitoring and evaluation framework.

There was also a discussion on research and development with committee members expressing interest in discussing developments within the RHD landscape and emphasised the importance of having visibility on current research projects. The JAC acknowledged the importance of keeping informed about the development of Strep A vaccines and the potential impact they may have on ARF and RHD.

The NACCHO Director RHD updated the committee on progress relating to Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHO'S) currently engaged by NACCHO to provide ARF/RHD treatment, prevention and screening activities under the RFS.

Next steps

The next meeting of the Advisory Committee will be held in June 2023. For further information, please contact the RFS JAC Secretariat via: RFS@health.gov.au.