

Media Release

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Keep the care of country kids close to home!

The Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Healthcare (ACSQHC) and National Health Performance Authority (NHPA) recently released *The Australian atlas of healthcare variation*.

Numerous recommendations arise from the Atlas, including several relating to paediatrics, such as those concerning Tonsillectomy, Myringotomy (the creation of a hole in the ear drum), treatment of asthma, the provision of medicines to children with anxiety and depression, and the use of antibiotics.

The weight of evidence in Australia and internationally suggests that much of the variation documented in the atlas is likely to be unwarranted. It may reflect differences in clinicians' practices, in the organisation of health care, and in people's access to services. It may also reflect poor-quality care that is not in accordance with evidence-based practice. This unwarranted variation may mean that some people are missing out on health care, while others are having interventions that are unlikely to be of benefit.

Children's Healthcare Australasia (CHA) has undertaken preliminary analysis of the Atlas, including potential reasons for variations in outcomes across different regions. There are several drivers for these variations, with further investigation required to understand them clearly.

According to CHA Deputy CEO, Julie Hale, families requiring specialist care may have to travel long distances to access the healthcare that they need. "What the Atlas does not identify is best practice care," she said. "Best practice care focuses on the needs of the child and their family, ensuring that they are put at the centre of care. Children feel more comfortable in a setting where they are familiar, and parents and carers tell us that they want to be at home to facilitate the life of the rest of the family at the earliest possible opportunity."

Many of these issues will be discussed at the *Caring for Country Kids* Conference to be held by CHA and the NRHA in Alice Springs, 18-19 April. Eminent speakers in the areas of paediatrics, child and adolescent mental health and ENT surgery will present on innovative approaches to meeting the needs of country kids. Early Bird registration closes on 31 January 2016.

For information visit the conference website at www.countrykids.org.au

Further information

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