

Vitamin D Deficiency in Victoria

Stakeholder Forum 23 October 2009

Action Notes

Context: The stakeholder forum was held to provide an opportunity for discussion regarding progress on the development and implementation of strategies to prevent vitamin D deficiency in Victoria and to identify future priorities for action.

Throughout 2008 and 2009, the Department of Health and its partners have been working together to progress a health promotion initiative focusing on the prevention of vitamin D deficiency in the Victorian population. Particular attention has been directed to developing and implementing strategies targeting at-risk groups in the community such as people residing in aged care facilities and high-rise public housing, people with dark skin and people who cover their skin for cultural or religious reasons.

Areas of work completed to date that were discussed included:

1. The development of evidence-based resources about vitamin D deficiency and its prevention, for use by medical and non-medical community workers.
2. A strategy to provide immediate and longer term improvements to the accessibility of high dose vitamin D supplements in Victoria.
3. Guidelines for planners, engineers and policy makers in local and state government to ensure the community has increased opportunities for appropriate sun exposure through improvements to the built environment.

Victorian Health Monitor – ‘400 for Health’

It was noted that for the first time, the Victorian Health Monitor (‘4000 for Health’) will be providing a unique set of data in late 2010 on the profile of vitamin D blood levels as well as skin types based on the Fitzpatrick scale, in the adult Victorian population, based on a randomised sample of 4000 persons aged 18 – 65 years

www.bakeridi.edu.au/4000_for_health/

Notes and actions Arising:

1. It was agreed that all Forum attendees would be provided with a **list of action notes** arising from the Forum – and would continue to be informed by the Department of further developments in this program of work.
2. The **DoH Advisory Group on vitamin D deficiency** is to reconvene to develop a future work program.
 - a. The reconvened advisory group is recommended to be made up of: Dr Mike Ackland (DoH, Office of CHO) and Sally Richardson (Diversity Unit) (co-chairs), Dr Simon Slota-Kan (DoH), Prof Peter Ebeling (Uni Melb), Dr Anjali Haikerwal (Uni Melb), Sue Heward (SunSmart), Dr Georgie Paxton (RCH), Meredith Cameron (DoH Public Health Comms), Lenora Lippman (GPV)
 - b. Proposed members to confirm their involvement
 - c. Terms of Reference for the A/G to be drafted by DoH for discussion at first meeting
 - d. The A/G to also consider the definition of a research agenda re vitamin D deficiency. (This matter was not raised at the forum, however was considered by Mike and Sally as an important matter for review).
3. **High dose vitamin D:**
 - a. Program of work being led by Peter Ebeling, Mike Ackland, Sally Richardson and Michael Furey (DoH Blood and Pharmaceuticals Program) aimed at achieving availability of a Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) listed/registered High Dose vitamin D supplement in Australia to continue.
 - b. Negotiations with the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC), TGA and selected pharmaceutical companies are well established

- c. Dr Joanne Gardiner is a Victorian GP rep on the PBAC Clinical Advisory Group for PBS Access for Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants. She will continue to advocate for registration and subsequent PBS listing of a high dose vitamin D product.
- d. In the shorter term, Sally Richardson and Michael Furey to continue to assist Authorised Prescribing of imported high dose vitamin D by GPs in North & West metro and Southern Regions. Will look to use learnings in SMR to translate to other areas of the state in need of high dose vitamin D.
- e. Need for GP education/ re-education about prescribing and compliance re high dose was highlighted.

4. Health Messages Information Sheets:

- a. Comments tabled at the forum and those submitted electronically by participants to be collated and considered for response in next revisions.
- b. The DoH Advisory Group to determine a policy re processes for generating updates to these documents, including consideration of those suggested at the forum. Need to get balance between incorporating new content in a timely manner and avoidance of generating stakeholder confusion with ad hoc version releases. A version identification system will be required.
- c. A revised communication / dissemination strategy will be developed by the DoH Advisory Group taking account of feedback from forum participants. Participants to send in dissemination ideas based on list handed out at forum. Additions raised at the forum included Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (Vic Branch), Australian Practice Nurses Association, Allied Health Professions Association

5. The Department was asked to explore options for preventive and treatment interventions in relation to vitamin D deficiency in selected at-risk groups (eg people with dark skin) being put forward as a proposed **Extended Primary Care GP Management item (EPC)**

- a. Mike and Sally to consult with the GP Partnerships Team at DoH. Peter Larter from the team is a member of the Refugee Health Network's GP Refugee Working Group.
- b. Need to identify criteria for inclusion as EPC items; rationale for inclusion; Refugee Health Network GP working group to explore feasibility of progressing this in partnership with DoH.

6. Vitamin D supplementation in Milk

- a. This issue was raised by some participants - and the discussion focused on options for universal vs selected milk product fortification. The former was considered to be potentially highly controversial within the community, politically risky and not likely to be feasible in the foreseeable future.
- b. The DoH Advisory Group is to compile a list of existing milk products containing Vit D (eg PhysiCal) on the market and provide comment on evidence of health benefits of current and any proposed level of fortification, veracity of any existing health claims, any labelling issues and any recommendations re fortification levels and community messaging in relation to these products. Advice will be sought from DoH Food Safety Regulatory Activities area (Note: Prof Ebeling's presentation provides relevant content re this matter and should be referenced by the Advisory Group).

7. GP and Health Care Professionals Education Strategy

- a. There is a need for a review of the information currently being disseminated to GPs and health care professionals about vitamin D in the context of the new health messages document. Eg GP learning modules, RACGP CPD Program, Better Health Channel, Foundation House accredited models for learning linked to RACGP, SunSmart. It was suggested that Dr Rob Grenfell, SMA Prevention in DoH and practicing GP, be consulted.
- b. The need for GP education/ re-education about prescribing and compliance re high dose highlighted earlier will also be included here.

- c. A peer reviewed paper to be drafted for publication outlining best current information that should be communicated to health care workers (Task for Anjali Haikerwal, Peter Ebeling, Mike Ackland, Sally Richardson, Simon Slota-Kan). To be done in context of overall communication plan.
- d. It was agreed to convene a **GP Education Strategy Working Group** to address these and related issues through a defined work plan (to be developed). Suggested membership (including forum volunteers): Mike Ackland (chair), Sally Richardson, Simon Slota-Kan, Rob Grenfell, Anjali Haikerwal, Wendy Thomas (Greater Monash GP Network), Lenora Lippman (GPV), Cancer Council GP unit rep and/or Sue Heward or rep from SunSmart, Jo Gardiner (GP Darebin CHC). Ideas at the forum included posters, pamphlets, working with refugee fellows at RCH and RMH, Aust Family Physician, MJA, GPV Website.

8. Community Education Strategy

- a. There are specific sectors of the community (eg cultural, ethnic, migrant at-risk groups) where there are barriers (such as language and health literacy) to the uptake and response to messages regarding optimising vitamin D levels and achieving improved health outcomes. These barriers need to be better defined and understood. This will involve the gathering and organisation of evidence and development of a strategic response to better engage communities around the health promotion messages and behaviours. Some key questions are as follows:
 - i. Who are the at-risk groups who need specific vitamin D messaging strategies?
 - ii. How might the above targeted sectors of the community be better able to obtain linguistically and culturally appropriate messages and be supported in responding to health promoting information re vitamin D deficiency?
 - iii. How can health care professionals and other health promoting workers who interface with at-risk groups be supported to implement any identified strategies
- b. A **Community Education Strategy Working Group** will be convened to address the above questions. Suggested membership (including forum volunteers): Sally Richardson (Chair), Mike Ackland, Mador Thou (WRHC), Lindy Marlow (WRHC), Ambi Kaur (Doutta Galla CHS), Deborah Wagner (DGCHS), Sue Heward or delegate from Sunsmart, Meredith Cameron (or delegate from Public Health Communications). May require broader representation from relevant health and community worker groups – to be determined.

Attendees

Dr John Carnie	Department of Health
Dr Mike Ackland	Department of Health
Sally Richardson	Department of Health
Dr Simon Slota-Kan	Department of Health
Dr Georgia Paxton	Royal Children's Hospital, Paediatrician
Dr Peter Ebeling	University of Melbourne/ Western Hospital, Endocrinologist
Dr Anjali Haikerwal	University of Melbourne
Michael Furey	Department of Health
Lisa Kuspira	Department of Health
Sue Heward	Cancer Council Victoria, SunSmart
Jen Makin	Cancer Council Victoria, SunSmart
Justine Osbourne	Cancer Council Victoria, SunSmart
Jackie Arbuckle	Cancer Council Victoria
Craig Sinclair	Cancer Council Victoria
Dimity Gannon	Cancer Council Victoria
Graham Sweet	Dandenong Casey GP Association
Jamuna Parajuli	Darebin Community Health Centre, Refugee Health Nurse
Anne Colahan	DEECD
Deborah Wagner	Doutta Galla CHS
Dr Joanne Gardiner	Doutta Galla CHS, GP
Ambi Kaur	Doutta Galla CHS, Refugee Health Nurse
Wendy Thomas	Greater Monash GP Network
Sue Jaraba	ISIS Primary Care
Dr Ross Drewe	ISIS Primary Care, GP
Katrina Sangster	ISIS Primary Care, Refugee Health Nurse
Wendy Fernandez	Maternal & Child Health Nurse, City of Greater Dandenong
Christine Heuston	Maternal & Child Health Nurse, City of Greater Dandenong
Dr Danni Bao	Paediatrician, Southern Health
Karen Donohoe	Primary School Nurse
Moira Mullumby	Primary School Nursing manager, DEECD
Stephanie Jones	Primary School Nursing manager, DEECD
Bev Biggs	Royal Melbourne Hospital, Infectious Diseases physician
Carmel Hegarty	Secondary School Nursing, DEECD
Peter Foley	Skin and Cancer Foundation Victoria
Maureen Convey	Western Region Health Centre
Lindy Marlow	Western Region Health Centre
Mador Thou	Western Region Health Centre
Dr Kathryn Rainsford	Western Region Health Centre, GP
Cath Beham	
Brian Vandenberg	