

MEDIA RELEASE



MORE FUNDING TO EXPAND SCABIES ELIMINATION PROGRAM

The spectacular success of a dedicated medical response to the scabies epidemic in remote Indigenous communities has attracted an additional \$150,000 from the Snow Foundation.

“The progress of this world-first approach is tremendous,” said Snow Foundation CEO Georgina Byron.

“In 2011, One Disease founder Dr Sam Prince convinced us to become their first donor by committing \$100,000 to kick start the pilot and help catalyse additional funding from other sources.”

The innovative program initiated by One Disease aims to eliminate crusted scabies and scabies as a public health issue in Australia. Crusted scabies is a highly infectious and debilitating condition caused by uncontrolled proliferation of millions of scabies mites. Once considered a rare disease, rates of crusted scabies in Arnhem Land are as high as one in 300, and patients face a 50 percent mortality rate over five years. Crusted scabies patients become ‘super spreaders’ of the disease, and are attributed to the high rates of simple scabies in the Top End of Australia. Seven in 10 children in East Arnhem are affected by scabies before their first birthday. If left untreated, scabies can lead to deadly downstream conditions such as rheumatic heart disease and kidney failure – rates of which in the Top End are among the highest in the world. Scabies and crusted scabies also carry heavy social implications, such as shame and stigma within the community, and can prevent patients from attending school and work.

“When we visited East Arnhem in 2012 to see the work first hand we were impressed by the holistic approach and the dedication of the One Disease operations team. We promptly committed another \$200,000 over two years,” Ms Byron said.

“In a relatively short period they have demonstrated dramatic outcomes, transforming the lives of people affected by scabies, and their results have been featured in the prestigious Medical Journal of Australia.

“Where many other Indigenous health programs have unfortunately failed, this one is an exemplar and we are proud to be associated with it. We believe our additional contribution of \$150,000 over two years will be very well invested,” Ms Byron said.

Dr Prince welcomed the additional funding from the Snow Foundation.

“The Snow Foundation has been one of our most informed, engaged and supportive donors, understanding that both catalytic and ongoing funding is needed for projects like this. We could not continue this transformational work without such commitment.”

The article published in the Medical Journal of Australia can be found at: www.mja.com.au

More information on One Disease can be found at: www.1disease.org

More information on the Snow Foundation can be found at: www.snowfoundation.org.au

1 December 2014

Media inquiries: Snow Foundation: Georgina Byron 0417 227 506
 One Disease: Sarah Vick / Dr Sam Prince 0402 054 130