

The PFAS Health Study

Information for the Katherine community

21 June 2018

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Plan For Today

- What is epidemiology?
- About the PFAS Health Study
- Community Reference Panel
- Open discussion

What is Epidemiology?

Epidemiology is the study of **disease distribution** and **frequency** in a population.



epidemiology

Epidemiology also investigates the relationship between **exposure** and **health outcomes**, which is a key part of the ANU epidemiological study.

What are Epidemiological Studies?

Epidemiological studies ask these core questions;

WHO

Who has developed the disease?

?

WHAT

What disease is occurring most?

?

WHEN

When did people start developing the disease?

?

WHERE

Where do people live that have the disease?

?

WHY

Why is the disease occurring?

?

What Can an Epidemiological Study Tell Us?

- ✓ If people with higher exposure are more likely to have a disease
- ✓ If people living or working in a specific place are more likely to be more exposed or more likely to develop a disease
- ✓ If there is link between other factors and the development of a disease

✗ How exposure makes people develop a disease

✗ If individuals will develop other diseases in the future because of their exposure

PFAS Health Study

1. Development of study protocols
 2. Systematic review of health effects
 3. Voluntary Blood Testing Program
 4. Focus groups of residents
 5. Blood serum study
 6. Cross-sectional survey
 7. Data linkage study
- Phase I
- Phase II

Voluntary Blood Testing Program

- Participation has been high in Katherine
- Those who have already had their blood tested will be contacted by the research team and provided with an information sheet about the blood testing.

Focus Groups

- What are people's worries about exposure to PFAS and their health?
- 8 focus groups were held in Jan/Feb 2018 in Williamstown and Oakey
- Currently finalising ethical approval to hold focus groups in Katherine
- Investigation zone residents and workers from Defence Bases
- Use this information for the cross-sectional survey

Blood serum study

- What are blood levels of PFAS in residents in Investigation Areas compared to people living in the surrounding area?
- Approximately 1,000 samples per town
- Mapping of PFAS results and other factors

Cross-sectional survey

- What factors are linked with high blood PFAS levels within the Williamtown, Oakey and Katherine communities?
- Help us understand:
 - Sickness and other health problems
 - Health worries
 - Feelings of distress and anxiety
 - Ways people have been exposed to PFAS

Data linkage study

- Are rates of diseases higher among people who have lived in Williamtown, Oakey and Katherine than in the general Australian population?
- Use Medicare information and other databases
 - Australian Cancer Database
 - Admitted Patient Data Collections
 - National Perinatal Data Collection

Consultation & Communication

- Community reference panel
- Community meetings
- Reports, presentations & publications

Community Reference Panel

We are looking for interested community members to be on the panel

The panel will:

- Provide the ANU team with a link with the people of Williamtown, Oakey and Katherine;
- Help make the study successful by working with the communities
- Help hear any community worries about the epidemiological study

PFAS Health Study Team

- Martyn Kirk, ANU
- Rosemary Korda, ANU
- Robyn Lucas, ANU
- Cate D'Este, ANU
- Cathy Banwell, ANU
- Tambri Housen, ANU
- Phil Batterham, ANU
- Aparna Lal, ANU
- Katherine Todd, ANU
- Susan Trevenar, ANU
- Kayla Smurthwaite, ANU
- Liz Walker, ANU
- Jochen Mueller, UQ
- Bruce Armstrong, USyd
- Archie Clements, Curtin
- Jennifer Bräunig, UQ
- Adrian Miller, CDU

Contacting the ANU Research Team

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Thank you