



Dermatologists coming to the aid of the Northern Territory

Australian Dermatologists have been applying their medical expertise as volunteers on projects in the Northern Territory to help combat easily treatable yet prolific skin diseases such as scabies and tinea.

The CEO of the Australasian College of Dermatologists, Rodney Sheaves, says that Dermatologists have been involved in volunteer intervention programs to combat scabies in remote communities in East Arnhem Land since 2000.

“The Northern Territory Healthy Skin Program is being run entirely by the Australasian College of Dermatologists, and is dependent on the generous input of Fellows and trainees from the College,” says Mr Sheaves.

“The Dermatologists involved give their time and expertise willingly and at no cost.

“We have recently submitted a funding proposal to the Federal Government, as we are seeking a small amount of financial support to allow us to continue this important work, hopefully to completely eliminate scabies and tinea in the Northern Territory.

“Our next focus is on the Elcho Island community, and we are sending two Dermatologists in July to continue our voluntary work there.”

Scabies is a skin disease caused by a tiny mite that burrows under the skin, causing itching and inflammation. Scabies can cause severe infection and lead to other complications like kidney disease and heart disease, and scratching the skin sores to alleviate itching carries the added risk of other germs entering the body.

Tinea is a fungal skin infection which affects about 15% of school-aged children, and if left untreated long-term, carries many of the same risks as scabies.

While both diseases are relatively easy to treat, they remain serious issues in the Northern Territory, as primary care physicians do not have time to effectively treat the plethora of skin disease in Top End communities.

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