TROPICAL HEALTH

As one of the few advanced economies in the tropics—a region that’s home to 40% of the world’s population—the Northern Territory (NT) is well placed to respond to the growing health research needs of nearby developing tropical regions.

Tropical health and research is also a key focus for the Australian Government in developing northern Australia.

Health is a major area of research strength for the NT’s Charles Darwin University (CDU), a research-intensive university ranked in the top 2% of universities in the world by Times Higher Education and in the top 50 universities in the world under 50 years old.

CDU’s Menzies School of Health Research conducts world-class research into conditions of major public health importance in northern Australia and the Asia-Pacific region, including malaria, tuberculosis, melioidosis, staphylococcal and streptococcal disease, rheumatic heart disease, pneumococcal disease, influenza and Hepatitis B.

The Menzies-led research in malaria, conducted in more than 20 countries across the Asia-Pacific region, has saved thousands of lives. Menzies also has expertise in mental health, nutrition, substance abuse, child health and development, and chronic diseases. It has established research links in more than 20 Asia Pacific countries.

The Menzies team is made up of over 250 staff operating across Australia and the Asia Pacific Region and is led by Darwin-based Professor Alan Cass, a kidney specialist with an impressive research background in the prevention and management of chronic disease and Indigenous health. A number of health conference planners have leveraged this network of experts and projects to provide rich on-ground content for their events staged in the NT. This was one of the key reasons why the Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology decided to hold their conference in Darwin in 2017.
Also located in Darwin within the Menzies School of Health Research faculty is RHDAustralia, the Australian Government’s national coordination unit that supports the control of rheumatic heart disease in Australia. From its Darwin base, the RHD unit works to prevent and reduce acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease in Australia. From its Darwin base, the RHD Unit works to prevent and reduce acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease in Australia. Internationally recognised expert, Dr Bo Remenyi from RHD Australia recently won the NT Australian of the Year Award in 2017 for her contribution to the prevention and management of rheumatic heart disease.

Darwin’s National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre (NCCTRC) has an international reputation for excellence in health training. It was developed in 2005 to respond to incidents that pose significant health threats to the population, and its location makes it Australia’s first responder to major onshore and offshore incidents in Australia and South-East Asia. The NCCTRC’s operations are supported by a significant disaster medical research program. It is also funding a tuberculosis research program in Timor-Leste.

In October 2015, the NCCTRC in partnership with the World Health Organization hosted the world’s first training exercise on disaster response coordination that created a group of skilled medical disaster professionals governments can deploy when major disasters occur.

The Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre at Royal Darwin Hospital opened in 2010 and treats oncology patients with the latest in radiation and chemotherapy technology. Northern Territory Radiation Oncology, based at the centre, is professionally affiliated with Royal Adelaide Hospital and conducts research and clinical trials to improve cancer outcomes in the Northern Territory.

Australia’s Royal Flying Doctor Service is one of the largest aeromedical organisations in the world. Using the latest in aviation, medical and communications technology, it delivers primary health care and 24-hour emergency service to people in regional Australia. The Royal Flying Doctor Service operates a showcase facility Darwin. A visit to these can be an excellent inclusion in conference programmes, enabling delegates to obtain insights into this amazing operation. The Darwin Waterfront located facility is just a short stroll from the Darwin Convention Centre, making it an especially convenient and innovative venue, activity and touring option.

CareFlight is an Australian aeromedical service that uses helicopters, aeroplanes and medijets to bring a hospital level of care to some 5000 critically ill and injured people every year. Its doctors and nurses are specially trained in pre-hospital and transport medicine. A new AW139 rescue helicopter at the Darwin base responds to accidents and conducts search and rescue operations across the Top End and off the NT coast. The new helicopter has a cruise speed of 260 km/h and an endurance of four hours. It has a two-person rescue hoist and is night vision goggle equipped.