

## **Workshop 7:**

### **The Science of Early Childhood Development: Data can Inform Local Area Planning to Improve Outcomes for Young Children (English Session)**

8/10/2016 10:15 am – 11:45 am

**Moderator: Dr. Patrick IP** Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, LKS Faculty of Medicine, The University of Hong Kong; Chairman, BGCA 80<sup>th</sup> Scientific Conference Organizing Committee

**Speaker: Prof. Frank OBERKLAID** Foundation Director, Center for Community Child Health, The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne; Honorary Professor of Paediatrics, University of Melbourne, Australia

**Title: The Science of Early Childhood Development: Data can Inform Local Area Planning to Improve Outcomes for Young Children**

#### **Abstract:**

The foundations of health and wellbeing are established in the early years, well before a child starts school. The early environments experienced by young children are powerful determinants of cognitive and social-emotional development that impact on a range of outcomes right throughout the life course. These research findings challenge us to develop policies and programs that are focused on prevention and early intervention.

Our advocacy efforts are greatly supported by having good data (*'no data, no problem, no solution'*). In Australia we now have 3 waves of national population data on over 96% of Australian 5 year old children obtained from the AEDI. This is a 100 item questionnaire, derived from the Canadian EDI, and completed for each child by teachers in the first year of formal schooling. Results are not reported for individual children, but aggregated at neighbourhood, community, state, regional and national level.

The AEDI has helped change the social discourse about early childhood, as up to one fifth of children are arriving at school 'vulnerable' in one or more areas of development. It has focused attention on the years leading up to school, and the debate about improving educational and life course outcomes now also includes the early years.

The results of the AEDI have highlighted the importance of a universal approach to service, as the data show that while there is an increased risk of vulnerability for children from disadvantaged communities, the actual numbers of vulnerable children come from non-disadvantaged communities. In addition it has strengthened the argument for a place-based approach to refocusing children's services; a top down 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to be successful given the diversity of individual communities in terms of the demographics of the populations, the service mix, and their understanding of the importance of the early years. The AEDI has informed the development of local community responses to the data – 'local solutions to local problems.'

This workshop will take participants through a planning exercise using data to inform service reform and decisions about resource allocation, and make a strong case for place-based approaches to change.