



MEDIA RELEASE

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LIFE-THREATENING ALLERGIES WILL RISE AT

NEW ROYAL ADELAIDE HOSPITAL – GLOBALAAI

South Australians could develop life-threatening allergies and suffer anaphylaxis reactions at the New Royal Adelaide Hospital if measures to reduce the use of latex are not addressed.

Not-for-profit organisation Global Anaphylaxis Awareness and Inclusivity (globalaai) is calling on the State Government to follow world-best practice by replacing latex gloves with safer and equally effective alternatives.

globalaai Founder, Dr Pooja Newman, said SA Health's decision to stock the nRAH with latex gloves could have significant consequences for healthcare workers and patients.

Up to 17% of healthcare workers have an occupational latex allergy as well as 20% of children with Spina bifida. Up to 5% of the general population – representing 1.2 million Australians – are allergic to latex.

“The use of latex contaminates surfaces and generates airborne particles, creating a life-threatening risk for patients with latex allergies when they present at hospital,” Dr Newman said.

“Anyone can develop a latex allergy with repeated exposure. The misguided decision to use latex gloves also places our doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers at risk and creates a major workplace health and safety issue for the State Government.

“The assumption that latex is a superior product is factually incorrect.

“Non-latex products using nitrile have been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and are just as safe and effective. Scientific evidence supports that nitrile gloves are just as protective against biohazards as latex.

“We cannot understand the decision to use latex gloves in the nRAH when leading health organisations around the world use non-latex alternatives.

“The very hospital that introduced the latex glove in 1894, Johns Hopkins Hospital in the United States, has led worldwide change in recent years in latex-safe practices.

“State Government healthcare facilities such as the Women's and Children's hospital are already latex-minimised and SA Ambulance uses latex-free nitrile gloves as standard.

“Private hospitals in Adelaide generally have greatly reduced the use of latex gloves, utilising latex-free nitrile alternatives, and a number of these hospitals are considered 'latex-safe'.

“In Hawaii the use of latex gloves across emergency healthcare, emergency care and food preparation was outlawed earlier this year.

“SA Health have said that they will provide latex-free options at the nRAH for patients or staff with latex allergies.

“This is the same policy they have at the current RAH but on numerous occasions, despite my own latex allergy being known, I have been repeatedly exposed to latex containing products which has re-triggered anaphylaxis and prolonged my ICU & hospital admissions.

“The only way to safely look after latex-allergic patients is to only use latex-free alternatives.”

Ms Newman said there were no additional costs associated with the use of non-latex gloves.

“Making the switch is cost neutral as non-latex products are no more expensive,” she said.

“Making the nRAH latex-safe is an opportunity to reduce the number of South Australians developing allergies and make the hospital a safer environment for patients and healthcare workers.”

Dr Newman has a severe latex allergy that has sent her to hospital numerous times, including a life-threatening reaction at the Adele concert earlier this year following the release of latex balloons.

Dr Newman founded globalaai to spread awareness of the seriousness of anaphylaxis and instigate social change to save lives. globalaai has developed emergency EpiPen stations for public spaces, homes and workplaces.

Media contact: Interviews with Dr Pooja Newman and other healthcare workers with latex allergies can be arranged. Contact Louise Marsh or Ben Smeaton at Corporate Conversation on 08 8224 3535.