



Grey medallion could help save a life

Professor Roy Kimble (left) and Paediatrics and Child Health researcher Dr Caroline Acton in the swim with Professor John Pearn.

Staff from the Royal Children's Hospital are among the first in Brisbane to be awarded a Grey Medallion from the Royal Lifesaving Society of Queensland.

Professor John Pearn, Professor Roy Kimble and friends of Queensland Health's Queensland Injury Prevention Council (QIPC) took part in a one-day course held at the Herston pool, specially designed for people aged over 55.

QIPC chairman Professor Pearn said seniors constituted one of the biggest groups of preventable drowning deaths in Australia.

"In 2008-09 there were 302 drowning deaths, with 94 involving people aged 55 and over," he said.

By 2020 it is estimated that one-third of the population will be 55 or older, so it is important to implement strategies that can prevent drowning.

Professor Pearn said the QIPC and the Royal Life Saving Society had teamed up to make a difference to the number of preventable drownings in older people.

"The Grey Medallion will give over-55s essential knowledge and skills that can prevent drowning, as well as focussing on aquatic exercise shown to improve blood cholesterol, lower blood pressure and help prevent falls in the elderly," he said.

"Aquatic exercise is an ideal form of physical activity for the over-55s because it is low-impact, suitable for active people and those with restricted mobility, such as people suffering from arthritis."

Royal Children's Hospital Trauma Service Director Professor Kimble said grandparents were shouldering more of the responsibility of caring for grandchildren, including taking them to pools and beaches.

"It makes good sense for grandparents to have the skills to be able to respond to an emergency situation if it should occur," he said.

The grey medallion program has four distinct components: water safety knowledge; resuscitation and emergency care; aquatic exercise and personal survival and life saving skills.

Professor Kimble said the resuscitation and emergency care component provided participants with emergency first-response skills - the ability to recognise an emergency, action-planning to deal with drowning and cardiac arrest and providing aftercare.

"Water safety education increases awareness of the dangers associated with rivers, lakes, dams, beaches and swimming pools, as well as during water activities such as boating and fishing," he said.

continued next page

from previous page

“The aquatic exercise component caters to all levels of fitness, mobility and swimming skills, imparting strategies that will help to strengthen muscles and increase fitness, flexibility and lung capacity.”

Course presenter Gwen Welford, who was the Queensland Royal Life Saving Society's female 'Life Saver of the Century' during its 2005 centennial celebrations, said the life-saving skills component was vital.

“Everyone can be a life-saver during an emergency by developing personal survival techniques such as sculling, treading water, floating and non-contact rescue skills such as wade-and-reach rescues,” she said.

For more information about the Grey Medallion or to find out where you can participate, visit www.rlssq.com.au or contact Royal Life Saving on 07 3823 2823.

For more statistics about child drownings, visit the Royal Life Saving Society Australia website and download the 15th annual drowning report publication of 2009.

The Queensland Children's Hospital will open in South Brisbane in 2014. It will provide acute hospital care for children, adolescents and their families across Queensland.

We are calling for any young Queenslanders aged between 12 and 21, with or without extensive hospital experience, to join our Youth Advisory Forum and make your voice be heard!

This is a really exciting opportunity to make a real difference to the new, state-of-the-art children's hospital. You will be able to contribute to the planning and design of Queensland Children's Hospital facilities and services.

The Youth Advisory Forum is about empowering the young people of Queensland with the opportunity to contribute to the standard of their own healthcare, by giving them a say about their hospital experience and ensuring the Queensland Children's Hospital will be a family-centred care facility.

For more information go to <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/childrenshospital>, phone on 3020 8711 or 0437 934 764, or email samuel_brookfield@health.qld.gov.au.

Queensland Children's Hospital Youth Advisory Forum seeks new members