

**29 May 2020 MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Iron Matters raised during Haemochromatosis World Week (June 1 - 7)**

While the global pandemic has heightened awareness of health matters, COVID-19 is by no means the only condition that can shorten our life span and impact quality of life.

Haemochromatosis, or iron overload, is the most common genetic disorder in Australia and, when left untreated, can cause liver disease, arthritis and diabetes. It is often under-diagnosed, despite the fact that one in 200 Australians is genetically predisposed to the disorder, and one in seven carries a mutation in the affected gene.

That’s why Haemochromatosis Australia has developed a new series of educational podcasts for general practitioners and allied health professionals which is being launched during World Haemochromatosis Week (June 1 - 7). The **Iron Matters** series of interviews with medical specialists and other health professionals covers diagnosis, screening, treatment and the serious implications if the condition is not identified and treated. The first in the **Iron Matters** series is online now at [www.ha.org.au/iron-matters](http://www.ha.org.au/iron-matters) and through most popular podcast apps. The podcasts may be particularly useful for GPs and practice nurses in rural, regional and remote areas where access to educational facilities can be limited.

Haemochromatosis Australia president Dr Di Prince said the condition has been historically underdiagnosed because its non-specific symptoms – including fatigue, depression and joint pain – are often confused with a range of other illnesses.

“Haemochromatosis results from incorrect uptake, processing and storage of dietary iron within the body. It can be easily managed, but sadly we continue to hear from people with significant health problems caused by a late diagnosis,” Dr Prince said.

“World Haemochromatosis Week is this year shining light on the importance of screening to increase early detection and testing. Haemochromatosis Australia supports a national screening program to identify those at risk of developing iron overload and associated preventable chronic conditions.“

Treatment for haemochromatosis is simple, safe and effective. It consists of regular removal of blood, known as a venesection. Because this procedure is the same as for blood donations, it benefits both the haemochromatosis patient and those who may require blood transfusions.

Earlier this year, a Parliamentary Friends of Haemochromatosis group was launched in Canberra to raise awareness about the condition and promote the need for more Australians to be diagnosed and treated. Haemochromatosis is more prevalent in people of Celtic and northern European origin and causes your body to absorb too much iron from food. This excess iron overloads body tissues, damages organs and can cause premature death.

For more information about World Haemochromatosis Week, visit Haemochromatosis Australia [www.ha.org.au](http://www.ha.org.au) or call 1300 019 028.

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**To organise an interview please contact:**

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