

Pregnancy diabetes to soar after test change

Amy Corderoy
HEALTH

ONE in five pregnant women could be diagnosed with gestational diabetes under new criteria doctors say will put more pressure on hospitals already struggling for resources to treat the condition.

The number of women with gestational diabetes could increase 50 per cent under guidelines that will call for universal screening of pregnant women and lower the blood glucose level deemed for a positive diagnosis.

The Australasian Diabetes in Pregnancy Society has taken a year and a half preparing to adopt the international criteria, in part because of a fear the health system would be unable to cope.

The *Herald* understands the society's new guidelines are likely to be released within two months. But the delay has meant some hospitals have already gone ahead with the plans – creating disparities in how women are treated across the state.

The children of mothers with gestational diabetes are at risk of more medical intervention during birth, being born large, and of developing diabetes and obesity later on.

National figures say about one in 20 women have the condition. But many doctors report a rate twice that, and under the new guidelines it could increase to between 14 and 18 per cent of all pregnancies.

The president of the society, Alison Nankervis, said she had just sent out the 13th draft of the guidelines, after a "protracted and frustrating process".

Many hospitals and pathology services – needed to complete the blood glucose level tests – felt they did not have the resources to implement the new rules.

"They are going to have a lot of

difficulty coping ... it is going to really stretch resources," she said.

The process of deciding when to test the women and what test to use also delayed the guidelines.

A Sydney endocrinologist and the immediate past president of the society, Glynis Ross, said hospitals were struggling to meet demand, particularly in areas of Sydney where changing ethnic make-up, older mothers and overweight mothers were creating more cases.

"Everyone is already struggling and trying to get extra staff, which isn't being approved because of staff freezes," she said. "We are actually missing these women already and I suspect they are running into trouble."

In the past, the level of blood glucose needed to qualify a woman as needing treatment for blood glucose was based on her risk of developing diabetes later in life.

But increasing research showing risks to the baby has led to a reassessment of the levels, which will decrease from 5.5mmol/L to 5.1mmol/L.

Diabetes was becoming more common in the community as well as during pregnancy, she said. "Quite a number of women are coming in to pregnancy with diabetes or pre-diabetes that hasn't been picked up, so their babies will be exposed early on," she said.

The director of diabetes services in Wollongong, Robert Moses, said Wollongong hospital had adopted the new diagnostic criteria more than a year ago.

Since then, the number of women diagnosed with gestational diabetes had increased from about 9.6 per cent to 13 per cent. He said some hospitals had started to change their criteria, but most were holding out for the announcement from the society.



Inspired ... artist Wendy Sharpe aboard the Aurora Australis as it stands off the Antarctic ice and, below, with some of her impressions of the trip.

Her white period: Sharpe paints in aid of Mawson's huts

Adam Fulton
ARTS

WENDY SHARPE has won the Archibald, Sulman and Portia Geach art prizes and been exhibited around Australia and beyond. But never before has her work been displayed thousands of metres deep in Antarctic waters.

The Sydneysider has just returned from a six-week trip as the invited artist aboard Australia's flagship Antarctic ship, Aurora Australis, on a mission to help what has been called the birthplace of the country's Antarctic heritage.

During the trip, research scientists on board had her draw on a styrofoam Esky the size of a six-pack before they sent it

almost five kilometres down in the ocean with scientific equipment. Her work returned crushed smaller than a coffee cup.

"It's incredible," Sharpe said. "Nothing brings [the underwater pressure] home to you better than that."

That piece, and scores of other artworks, are to be exhibited in Sydney mid-year and made into a book. The proceeds will go to the conservation of Mawson's huts, Antarctic shelters built by the Australian explorer Sir Douglas Mawson and his team 100 years ago and now among only a handful of remaining sites from what is called the heroic age of Antarctic exploration.

Sharpe said she made "piles and piles" of paintings and drawings during the centenary



trip on themes inspired by the huts, shipmates, inquisitive penguins, the sky and the auroras. She also made visual diaries of daily life aboard the 95-metre vessel.

"I was painting all the time," she said. She often did this sitting because the ship was too rocky for standing. "They have ocky straps to hold everything down so it doesn't fall all over the place."

The dramatic landscape of "endless white going on and on forever" and the vast isolation of Mawson's huts were among Sharpe's overriding impressions in a location that was "like being on another planet". The huts are almost 2000 kilometres from the nearest base.

The not-for-profit Mawson's Huts Foundation invited and funded Sharpe's trip as guest artist aboard the ship, which steamed from Hobart to Antarctica and back to Fremantle. The foundation has made 10 trips to

carry out restoration work on the huts in 15 years. It can do this for just two months a year when there is a lull in winds that can reach 360 km/h.

The foundation's founder and chief executive, David Jensen, described the huts as "the birthplace of Australia's Antarctic heritage". When his team first visited them, in 1997, they were in danger of collapse, he said. After their conservation work, they were now "remarkably sound" – but there was still much to do.

Mr Jensen said Sharpe's work on the trip was outstanding.

"Wendy has captured the hut and the interior and the Antarctic in a way I have never seen captured by an artist of her calibre before," he said.

Freed Bulli rapist barred from town and fitted with anklet

Nick Ralston
CRIME

ONE OF the state's worst serial rapists has walked free from jail after 22 years' imprisonment but will be banned from going near the small Illawarra township he once terrorised.

Casually dressed in a faded black baseball cap, white polo shirt, jeans and sunglasses, Terry John Williamson, 42, walked out of Silverwater prison yesterday having served all but two years of his maximum 24-year sentence.

The man dubbed the "Bulli Rapist" for the brutal sexual assaults he committed against 11 victims, including children as young as five, over a 10-month period between 1989 and 1990, had nothing to say as he left jail.

He was then taken to Long Bay where he was fitted with an anklet to allow his every move to be electronically monitored before being driven to the approved halfway house where he will live.

Under 42 strict parole conditions Mr Williamson must not visit the Illawarra region and he has also been banned from approaching any of his victims, one of whom was so terrified she



Under supervision ... Terry John Williamson. Photo: Kate Geraghty

has moved interstate and another overseas.

Mr Williamson, who was 19 when he committed his crimes, will also have regular drug and alcohol testing and must take anti-libido medication.

The Victims of Crime Association League said Mr Williamson should have been jailed for life but due to his "inadequate sentence" the NSW State Parole Board had no option but to order his release under supervision.

If Mr Williamson had served his full 24-year sentence he would have been released from jail without any conditions being imposed on him.

The league's vice-president, Howard Brown, said while the convicted sex offender remained supervised the risk to the community was low.

"But I will become quite concerned when the community compliance group, which is currently responsible for his supervision, hands the matter over to the probation and parole service," Mr Brown said.

"There is historical evidence to indicate the probation and parole will not do a proper job of supervision."

The latest figures by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research revealed that 42 per cent of adults convicted of sexual assault and related offences re-offend within 15 years.

The figure was lower than for all offences (58 per cent) and less than other common offences such as break and enter (81 per cent) and robbery (75 per cent). The research also found that 64 per cent of adults convicted of assault also re-offended within the same timeframe.

Stamp sales scam worth \$1.3m, court told

Louise Hall
COURTS

THE licensee of a post office in The Rocks allegedly stole about \$1.3 million in a scam involving bogus postage stamp sales, the Sydney District Court has heard.

Tim Alexander Greenland told the court yesterday he ran three post offices, in Millers Point, Warriewood and Gordon, as well as a printing company and an "erotic massage business".

He pleaded guilty to theft, admitting he fraudulently processed thousands of letters and parcels as being stamped, when

there was no stamp affixed. Sarah McNaughton, SC, for the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, said Greenland ran the scam from May 2001 until he was arrested and charged in August 2009. He spent four months in jail before obtaining bail.

"It is alleged that he pretended to sell stamps ... he was getting reimbursed for stamp sales that he didn't make," Ms McNaughton said.

However, Greenland's barrister, Peter Hastings, QC, said his client only carried out the theft for a period in 2009, and dis-

puted the \$1.3 million figure. "The calculations are fundamentally inadequate and erroneous," he said.

Mr Hastings said Greenland allowed mail to go through without stamps for a few months in 2009 because he "was in a state of dissatisfaction" with Australia Post after several of his lucrative bulk mail accounts were brought inside the organisation's head office, reducing his earnings.

Mr Hastings also disputed the number of stamps that were alleged to have been caught up in the fraud, saying Greenland obtained stamps from several

sources. However, Duncan McLeod, from Australia Post's corporate security group, told the court that as far as he knew, post office licensees only sourced stamps from head office.

Greenland admitted to processing bulk mail as ordinary stamped mail, earning him a 13 per cent commission for each letter, rather than the 5 per cent commission on bulk mail.

"I wanted the higher commission, I wanted a higher profit margin," he said. "Australia Post was still making 87 per cent."

The sentencing hearing was adjourned to February 23.

Video link for patients

Patients on Norfolk Island will be treated by video link in Sydney under an Australian-first agreement to be launched today. Each year, about 50 Norfolk Islanders are flown to hospitals for treatment on an ad-hoc basis. But now the patients will be assessed by doctors in the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District and transferred to hospitals within the district or the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network only if needed. Terry Clout, the chief executive of the district, said the arrangement would mean patients would get more timely and smooth treatment. The director of mental health, Murray Wright, said he believed the arrangement would mean fewer psychiatric patients would need to be transferred.

Amy Corderoy

AFL first for web name

The Australian Football League has become the first Australian organisation to announce it will apply for a customised domain name .afl. In January the internet governing body opened applications for government, corporations and charities to buy generic domain names to replace standard suffixes such as .com and .net. It means companies such as Nike can customise its web address with www.shoes.nike. The AFL's marketing chief, Andrew Catterall, said, afl would make it easier for fans to navigate the organisation's websites, and protect players' and clubs' online identities. Customised web addresses would also present marketing opportunities for the AFL, he said. The first addresses should go live next year.

Nicky Phillips

No halfway on highway

The state government continues to reject the Gillard regime's request for a joint-funding split to finish the duplication of the Pacific Highway by 2016. The federal Transport Minister, Anthony Albanese, wrote to the state Roads Minister, Duncan Gay, last month with a schedule that would finish the highway in five years if funding was shared equally. But Mr Gay yesterday said the federal government should pay 80 per cent. "They are looking to change their funding mix ... to 50-50," Mr Gay said. "That would be a reduction in their commitment of \$2.2 billion." At present the Gillard government is paying 80 per cent – a historically high proportion of federal funding for the highway.

Jacob Saulwick

Arrest after shooting

A man who allegedly shot a woman in the head on the doorstep of her home was known to her, police say. The 21-year-old was shot in the middle of her forehead after answering her front door in Dapto, on the NSW south coast, about 6.20pm on Wednesday. Her 27-year-old partner and four children were inside the property but were not hurt. Acting Superintendent Bryan Rugg of the Lake Illawarra local command said police had arrested a 26-year-old man. He appeared in Wollongong Local Court charged with shooting with intent to murder yesterday and was remanded in custody. The 21-year-old woman was flown to St George Hospital and remained in a critical condition last night.

AAP

Families praise pair killed in highway tragedy

Lisa Davies
CRIME EDITOR

SARAH FRAZER was finally about to fulfil her dream, which was to study in pursuit of her great passion – photography.

"My car is pretty much all packed up except for my bedding and a few loose ends," the 23-year-old wrote to her aunt on a Facebook page.

But less than 24 hours later, not long after she started out on her "newest adventure", she was killed on her way to university in Wagga Wagga.

Her faithful car, brimming with her possessions, had failed her when she needed it most, breaking down along the way.

Ms Frazer and the man who came to her aid on the Hume Highway were both killed instantly on Wednesday when a B-double failed to see them until it was too late.

A tow-truck driver and well-regarded southern highlands local, Geoff Clark, had rushed to Ms Frazer's aid when her car broke down on a narrow stretch of the highway, about two kilometres from Mittagong.

Her car could fit only partly in the road's shoulder, and the two were trying to prepare it for towing.

It is believed the truck driver may simply have seen the two vehicles too late.

Ms Frazer, from Springwood in the Blue Mountains and a former student at St Columba's High School, was described yesterday as "a truly amazing person".

"A world traveller, fearless, funny, kind, strong-willed, bright and beautiful," her aunt Kristina wrote on Facebook.

"She was my niece and my friend. I will miss her terribly."

Another relative described his family's grief on such a "very sad day", saying his "beautiful, intelligent cousin" had died "on her way to start a new life" at university.

Police are investigating the crash and the truck driver is assisting with inquiries.

The driver was treated for shock at Bowral Hospital.

Mr Clark, a father of four young boys aged 8 to 14, was hailed as a good Samaritan for stopping on the dangerous strip of the highway and volunteering to drive Ms Frazer to Wagga Wagga.

Inspector Mark Wall, from Bowral police, who knew Mr Clark, said she "was a hard worker and a good bloke".

He had been a truck driver for most of his life before starting his own towing business eight years ago.

His widow, Sam, told reporters: "He was a very caring husband. Thoughtful, just the best really ... he did all that he could do to be safe."



Sarah Frazer ... "fearless".

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