



**WEDNESDAY 28 NOVEMBER**

**Funnel-web spider now in greater Brisbane area ... emergency departments urged to get antivenom**

Emergency departments in the greater Brisbane area are being warned to prepare for funnel-web spider envenomations, following the first recorded envenomation to a resident in inner city Brisbane. Dr David Rosengren, director of emergency services at Greenslopes Private Hospital, will discuss this case in a poster presentation to the annual scientific meeting of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine will be told.

The conference is being held at Conrad Jupiters, Gold Coast, November 26-30.

The funnel-web spider is arguably the most venomous spider in the world, Dr Rosengren said.

“Envenoming following a bite from either the *Atrax* or *Hadronyche* species of Australian funnel-web spider can trigger a response which has potentially lethal consequences.

“Prior to the development of specific funnel-web spider antivenom, 13 confirmed deaths from funnel-web spider envenomation had been recorded in Australia.”

He said the snake is distributed along the east coast of Australia, with its usual habitat being bush and moist forest regions.

Until now, surveys have suggested funnel-web spiders occurred only in the outskirts of Brisbane contiguous with bushland or native rainforest.

The case presented to the conference is the first likely funnel-web spider envenomation in suburban Brisbane.

“Following this recent clinical presentation consistent with funnel-web spider envenomation, a high density of funnel-web burrows was excavated from a creek bank directly adjacent to housing in inner suburban Brisbane,” Dr Rosengren said.

“The venom from a female spider was taken from these burrows, and we confirmed it was similar to *Hadronyche infensa*.

“Because we found spiders of different ages, it is likely that *H.infensa* funnel-web spiders have been present in Brisbane for many years.”

Dr Rosengren said recent drought conditions in Brisbane have potentially influenced the behaviour of these spiders, concentrating the population near available water.

This increases the risk of clinically significant envenoming to humans.

“Emergency departments in the greater Brisbane area should be prepared for this clinical scenario and stocks of CSL funnel-web spider antivenom – which until now we considered unnecessary – should be readily available.”

**FURTHER INFORMATION AND TO ARRANGE INTERVIEWS:**

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