

Sexual health is everyones responsibility

Yarning about sexual health & wellbeing COMMUNITY REPORT

We wanted to understand how our mob seek out support and information to make decisions about their sexual reproductive health and wellbeing.

We yarned with a range of people - young, old, men and women about planning a family, contraception, Sexually Transmitted Infections & treatments and healthy relationships.

Cultural protocols for men's and women's business were followed by having separate men and women yarning circles.

HISTORY

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been subjected to colonial state control over their bodies and sexual wellbeing. When the European settlers came they committed horrendous acts of sexual violence on our mob and transmitted sexual infections, some of which, like Syphilis, if untreated can have long consequences like tumors, blindness and damage the nervous system, brain and other organs.

Our mob were not allowed treatment and were instead shamed and marginalized.

This has heavily impacted health seeking behaviours particularly in state health settings, where our mob are likely to be exposed and at risk of experiencing racism when accessing care. This has caused distrust between health professionals and our mob.

COLLABORATION

The Institute for Urban Indigenous Health collaborated with staff from the Molly Wardaguga Research Centre to run this project in South East Queensland. The project was led by Indigenous researchers.



LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

We know that our mob sometimes get shame talking about this topic. But it was an important yarn to have to find out the attitudes and knowledge community have about sexual health so that we can support them and health services so that mob can feel safe talking about it, seeking help and making informed decisions.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which this study was conducted the Turrbal, Yuggera and neighbouring clans and extend that acknowledgement to all First Nation tribes throughout Australia. We pay respects to the elders past, present and emerging.

Thank you to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women that volunteered their time to join the yarning circles and thank you to the ACCHO clinics that held space and helped to facilitate these yarning circles.

Who do you feel most comfortable yarning with about your sexual health & wellbeing?

FRIENDS? FAMILY? DOCTORS?

The yarns we have with family and friends can impact the decisions we make when it comes to our health and wellbeing. Most of the mob who joined our yarning circles said they would go to family, kin or friends for advice about family planning, contraception and healthy relationships.

“ I would talk to a friend. [...] an older sistergirl, or one of my mates [...] 'cause that's more comfortable.

It was also reported that when our mob don't have a strong trusting relationship with their health providers they feel shame to talk or seek help.

Recruiting mob as sexual health promoters and providing the right training and education would create a safe space with meaningful relationships making it more comfortable to talk about sexual health without feeling shame or judged.

“ I need to have a relationship with someone before I trust them [and the information they give], like I can see a doctor for the first time, [but] id probably be more inclined to listen to the midwife that went through my whole pregnancy than to listen to a doctor I saw once.

BELINDA, PARTICIPANT



Elders, said that they are committed to helping the younger generations make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. This also means yarning with young women about healthy relationships and life aspirations and supporting young woman when they decide to start having families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Aboriginal community controlled health services are in the best position to facilitate sexual health yarns and knowledge sharing. Yarning with mob about family goals and aspirations can be done at health check ups and as part of the Deadly Choices program. The Deadly Choices program runs various programs that aim to empower mob of all ages to make healthier lifestyle choices.

“ It's not all about sex. It's about respect and strength in relationships

CASSIE, PARTICIPANT

Normalize the conversation. Have it more often



ACCHOs provide training to all health staff about contraception options



Prioritize building healthy relationships and strong families

Grow community knowledge of sexual health



Employ & support mob to be community-based sexual health promoters and educators

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Open Access Full Text Article | ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Community-Based Sexual and Reproductive Health Promotion and Services for First Nations People in Urban Australia

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Context: Little is known about sexual and reproductive health promotion for First Nations peoples in Australia. This study aimed to understand community preferences, knowledge and access to contraceptive services to inform this understanding to make recommendations which align with community needs and preferences.

Methods: Qualitative First Nations-led yarning circles were conducted with community members and health service providers using and/or working at Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations (ACCHOs) in Brisbane, Queensland. Cultural protocols ensured women's and men's issues were discussed separately collected and analysed. Thematic analysis was conducted by multiple coders, privileging

READ MORE IN OUR PUBLISHED PAPER:

Hickey, S.,† Roe, Y.,† Harvey, C., Kruske, S., Clifford-Motopi, A., Fisher, I., Bernardino, B., & Kildea, S. (2021). Community-based sexual and reproductive health promotion and services for First Nations people in urban Australia. *International Journal of Women's Health*, 2021(13),467-478.