



New training film to promote MBS Item 715 Indigenous health checks

Dr Danielle Arabena* writes...

EACH year, the Indigenous Health Training Team from General Practice Training Qld (GPTQ) visits Indigenous registrars, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical services and key stakeholders.

Last year during these visits I was very disappointed to learn that not all GP practices offered MBS Item 715 Indigenous health checks, despite them identifying patients as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

After reviewing the curriculum for General Practice nationwide, I found there was a gap – with the importance of 715s not being formally taught as part of GP training.

With this in mind, I investigated ways GPTQ could look at closing this gap whilst improving both GP registrars' and supervisors' training, and the health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by working with the local community, Elders and Key Indigenous stakeholders (hence addressing the engagement gap).

As part of our visits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Services in the GPTQ coverage area, we were able to make a fun and educational film project with Yulu Burri Ba Aboriginal Corporation for Community Health on Stradbroke Island.

We had the opportunity to involve local Aboriginal adults and children who starred in the project and we obtained a great deal of community support.

The project was created for two reasons.

Firstly, to showcase the great sense of community that comes with working in an



The GPTQ health team on the job.

AMS to GPTQ registrars in the hope they may not only consider committing part of their GP training time to an AMS, but most importantly that all GP Registrars will be inspired to look further into providing Indigenous health services at a higher level than they currently may be doing.

The aim is to create a workforce dedicated to closing the gap and further develop a system that supports good patient outcomes throughout the patient's journey.

Secondly, our mission was to promote Close the Gap and present Indigenous health in a refreshing light to the wider

Australian community and those working in the health industry.

The video was launched on March 17.

The film begins by asking doctors how they want to feel?

It then follows a doctor as he transitions from a non-engaging work environment to working in the vibrant and engaging world of Indigenous health.

He is taught traditional dance and interacts positively with staff and clientele. The entire film was designed to be fun and enjoyable for all who watch it.

Through partnering with local Indigenous communities, the IHT Team are always

looking at building new processes, training events and cultural immersion opportunities where staff, medical health professionals and, more broadly, GPTQ's stakeholders are able to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and what challenges/barriers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face when accessing health care.

Here are two initiatives currently under development:

- An Indigenous Health Training weekend, where about 50 GP Registrars and five medical educators (those not currently working in Indigenous health) will visit Indigenous communities within Queensland to engage with the Elders of the community who will share their knowledge around health/healing. The local AMSes will be highlighted for their expert knowledge on Indigenous health and will co-present a session on 715 education in conjunction with GPTQ Medical Educators. As well, GPTQ will support the local Indigenous community through holding a market stall for artists to sell artwork and where feasible use Indigenous businesses to support the weekend (ie catering, transport, functions).

- We are creating strategies to tackle perceived barriers to patients' access to the 715 health assessments at a GP practice level. One strategy involves the engagement of the local PHN to come and present a cultural education workshop to all the practice managers and staff at our annual conference so all practices in GPTQs territory are able to be signed up to close the gap.

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Strategy is working at WAMS

WALGETT Aboriginal Medical Service (WAMS) has been providing health services to the local community since 1986.

WAMS is also one of the largest employers of Aboriginal people in the north-west of NSW.

The organisation has always been proactive in recruiting Aboriginal people, and over 50% of employees at WAMS are Aboriginal.

A recent innovation, the implementation of a Recruitment and Retention Strategy in collaboration with the (NSW) Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) has been successful in recruiting Aboriginal people into a range of traineeships at WAMS.

The Strategy, supported by funding from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, provides a range of support to Aboriginal people who have no health qualifications to apply for a job and if employed undertake training in a health qualification.

Two recent success stories are Eileen Byers and Glenn Sands, who were recruited in December 2015 as trainee Aboriginal Health Workers and are undertaking Certificate III in Aboriginal and Torres Strait



Glenn Sands and Eileen Byers outside the WAMS Chronic Disease building.

Islander Primary Health Care.

Eileen Byers is from Casino, northern NSW, and has taken the courageous step to move to

Walgett to work at WAMS.

She has left her family and friends to take up this opportunity to study and develop

a career for herself in Aboriginal Health.

Eileen is already a role model for many people, having being

accepted into the Indigenous Marathon Project last year and completing the New York Marathon.

She says that leaving her family has been the biggest challenge for her so far in taking up the position at WAMS.

"I want to have a career in health and it was important for me and my family that I do this," she said.

"Everyone at Walgett has been fantastic and I love working at WAMS."

Glenn Sands was born and raised in Walgett and is a proud Yuwaalaraay/Gamilaraay man.

After a variety of jobs, including working as a self-employed sole trader and a member of the NSW Fire & Rescue, he made the decision to apply for a traineeship at WAMS.

He chose to become an Aboriginal Health Worker at WAMS because "I wanted to help my community".

One of the things he likes about working at WAMS is the training he's receiving, with the opportunity to improve his career path and reach the peak of his career.

His advice to others in a similar position as himself is: "...be proud in what you do."