

## Chronic disease, medications and lifestyle: perceptions from a regional Victorian Aboriginal community

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It is well established that there is a disparity in health and health standards among Australian Aboriginal populations compared to non-Aboriginal groups and that life expectancy for Aboriginal people remains significantly lower than that for the non-Aboriginal population. Many Aboriginal people are medicated for chronic health conditions and it has been suggested that poor medication management may contribute to the increased morbidity and mortality of Aboriginal people. Much of the literature to date has focused on the perceptions of health care providers rather than on the perceptions of the Aboriginal people themselves, hence a paucity of available information regarding the perceptions of Aboriginal people and their management of chronic illnesses and medications. This study aimed to gather information about the perceptions of a group of Victorian Aboriginal people with diagnosed medical conditions requiring medications regarding their lifestyle, disease management and medication usage. Study participants represented a purposive sample of 20 Aboriginal people over 18 years of age, who attend a local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service and who take medications as part of their chronic disease care. Participant interviews were conducted by Aboriginal Health Workers in a culturally appropriate and competent manner using a semi structured *yarning* process. Verbatim transcripts were validated by cross-check between members of the research group including the AHW research partners and coded for descriptive statistical analysis. The findings may help facilitate better health outcomes for this population by: (i) informing health care providers about issues that are important to Aboriginal people in their medication usage and self management of chronic illnesses; (ii) highlighting the inappropriate use of the term “non-complier” when describing Aboriginal people; and (iii) promoting the efficacy of the delivery of care by the Aboriginal Health Services in order to inform mainstream health care providers of the role they can play to improve the use of medicines by their Aboriginal patients and support patient empowerment and self-management.