

Outcomes of a population health program at Orange Aboriginal Medical Service

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Background: A population health approach seeks to address the health of the whole community rather than focusing solely on individual care. This approach is used internationally and is consistent with strategic plans in NSW to improve Aboriginal health outcomes through partnerships, consideration of the social determinants of health and outcomes monitoring. The Orange Aboriginal Medical Service (OAMS) is a regional Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) in NSW. There is currently little literature on the outcomes of the implementation of a population health program at an ACCHS.

Aims: The Population Health Program within OAMS aimed to develop a population health approach to improve the health outcomes of the Aboriginal Community and to develop staff skills in population health and research.

Methods: The Program began in February 2013 as a collaborative initiative involving OAMS, the Universities of Sydney (USyd) and Western Sydney (UWS), the Western NSW Medicare Local and the Western NSW Local Health District. Organisation representatives form the Population Health Committee and provide direction and support to the Program. The Program has involved staff workshops to identify the health needs of the community served by OAMS, to identify the current services provided by OAMS, gaps in data collection and services, and improvements necessary to address these health needs and service gaps. This is an ongoing iterative process and monitoring outcomes is an important component of this approach.

Results: To date the outcomes from this Program have been: i) a Health of Our Community Report, ii) three research projects, iii) receipt of a tobacco control grant and employment of a tobacco control coordinator; iv) recognition of a deficit in clinical data with resultant improvements in data collection; v) quantified improvement in staff knowledge and confidence in population health; vi) growth in the number of partners and viii) recognition of gaps in service provision with resultant service improvements in patient follow up, primary health prevention and engagement with community organisations and service partners.

Conclusions: A Population Health Program delivered from within an AMS is effective in building partnerships, research and developing staff skills for improving the health of community. A program similar to that implemented at OAMS may assist rural, remote and regional AMS to address the health needs of their populations. This presentation will describe the Program and give insight into the lessons learned and the ideas and actions generated.