Closing the Gap: Advancing Indigenous Eye Health Across Diverse Regions and Systems

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Uma Jatkar,
Indigenous Eye Health
National Rural Health Alliance Conference 2017
National Indigenous Eye Health Survey 2008

- 30 randomly selected sites
- 5-15yr old and 40yr & older
- 2883 people examined
Vision Loss in Children
One fifth less common than non-Indigenous

Vision Loss in Adults
Blindness is 6 times more common
Low Vision is nearly 3 times more common

Causes of Blindness in Adults
Cataract
Refractive Error and Optic Atrophy
Diabetic Eye Disease
Trachoma

Overall 94% of Vision Impairment is avoidable
...and 35% have never had an eye exam
2016 National Eye Health Survey

For Indigenous participants:

• Blindness is now 3 times more common, but rates of vision loss same

  Major causes remain same

• 40% of patients needing cataract surgery did not have specialist treatment

• 50% of patients with diabetes did not have a diabetic retinopathy exam in last year
We know what we need to do...

**Trachoma**
- Implement the SAFE Strategy
  - Ensure SAFE until elimination

**Cataract**
- If VA is <6/12 or impaired function
  - Ensure provision of surgery

**Diabetes**
- Retinal assessment for those with diabetes (every 12 months)
  - Ensure provision of laser treatment

**Refractive Error**
- Screening for VA (near and distance vision)
  - Ensure provision of spectacles
The patient journey is like a ‘leaky pipe’
The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision
Launched 2012

42 recommendations
9 domains

Requires activity at three levels:
• National
• State & Territory
• Regional

Endorsed by:
• National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
• Optometry Australia
• Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists
• Vision 2020 Australia
### Regional implementation of the Roadmap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Regions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Grampians, Loddon Mallee, Gippsland, Barwon South West, Geelong, North &amp; West Metropolitan and Southern Metropolitan Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Katherine Region, Central Australia/Barkly, Greater Darwin/East Amhem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Western NSW, Western Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Kimberley, Pilbara, NG Lands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>APY Lands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
What makes a successful regional approach?

- Regional stakeholder group
- Assess gap in existing services (data sharing)
- Regional service directory & clinical pathways
- Identify coordination roles
- Develop regional action plan & priorities
- Regular data collection, reporting & monitoring

★ Overseen by statewide committee (Victoria)
South East Queensland

- Led by Institute of Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH)
- Cover 18 clinics
- Over 30,000 active clients
IUIH Eye health program

• Old referral pathways:
  - 55 referred for public cataract surgery, only 1 received treatment

• Redesign of cataract surgery process:
  - optometry led
  - supported by Commonwealth and Qld funds
  - focus on in-clinic eye exams and referral to private surgical care
## 223 surgeries in 15 months

### Post Op/ follow up success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Success Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacist contact</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical follow up 1 day post op</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical follow-up 4 weeks post op</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetic follow up 8 weeks post op</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Support Services used (% of clients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Usage Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carer accompanied patient</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional transport (pre op)</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional transport (day surgery)</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IUIH Achievements

- Optometry services in 17 clinics
  - 7,500 eye checks in 2017

- IUIH is the largest supplier of no cost spectacles in Queensland
  - deliver over 3,500 pairs in 2017

- Visiting ophthalmology in 2 hub clinics
  - deliver 850 ophthalmology consultations
Grampians, Victoria

One of four Victorian regions with an Indigenous eye health project

- 48,610 sq km
- 2,407 Indigenous people
Grampians Eye Health project

- Began in 2014 with project plan development and eye health project officer based at Budja Budja Aboriginal Cooperative

- Grampians Eye Health Advisory Committee (met quarterly)
  - Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative,
  - Budja Budja Aboriginal Cooperative
  - Goolum Goolum Aboriginal Cooperative
  - VACCHO
  - Department of Health & Human Services
  - Australian College of Optometry
  - Western Vic PHN (formerly Grampians Medicare Local)
  - Indigenous Eye Health, University of Melbourne
Grampians Achievements

- Motivated & engaged regional stakeholder group
- Service delivery improvements
- New slit lamps and retinal cameras in local Aboriginal Medical Services
- Increased uptake of subsidised spectacles
- Additional funds for optometry services within AMS
- Assistance in developing diabetic retinopathy health promotion materials
## Key outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Time frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual retinal checks</td>
<td>Increase of over 55%</td>
<td>2013-2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cataract surgery rates</td>
<td>+64%</td>
<td>2015-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidised spectacles</td>
<td>+50%</td>
<td>2014-16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘Check Today, See Tomorrow’ Resource Kit

- Personal story videos
- Music videos
- ‘Promoting regular eye checks’ video

- Poster series
- Brochure
- Flipchart
- Diabetic Retinopathy screening card

http://www.iehu.unimelb.edu.au/
Great South Coast

• Began in 2014 with stakeholder group and regional project officer based at Winda-mara Aboriginal Corporation

• Also a regional Eye and Ear Coordinator
  
  - Undertook clinical assessments and retinal screens within local AMS and schools
Great South Coast achievements

- Focus on community engagement with mainstream service providers
  - Cultural focus: specific visits to Lake Condah and Tower Hill cultural sites
  - Networking to improve pathways and patient engagement, especially cultural safety in mainstream clinics

- Specific effort to engage hospitals/ Aboriginal Liaison Officers

- Trial of new software system to develop referral pathways and prevent patient drop-out between ACCOs, clinicians and tertiary care
Key outcomes

- Improved cultural safety reported

- Increase in subsidised spectacles provided to Aboriginal clients

- Increased optometry visits to local ACCOs through the Australian College of Optometry
  - Increased screening and eye exams

- Increased screening of Aboriginal children in schools through the regional eye & ear coordinator
We now have the evidence, strategy and capacity to eliminate unnecessary vision loss for Indigenous Australians...

...we can close the gap for vision

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