Making Blow Away the Smokes DVD for Indigenous smokers—the journey and lessons learnt

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Objective: To describe the process of making a smoking cessation DVD for rural and regional Aboriginal smokers on the north coast of NSW, from concept through to production and distribution.

Background: Indigenous smoking prevalence is high in northern NSW. Audiovisual messages are useful for Aboriginal health promotion. The aim of the Blow Away the Smokes DVD was to provide a culturally appropriate self-help resource to be viewed at home, or with an Aboriginal health worker.

Methods: Community consultation occurred through the No Smokes North Coast Steering Committee, and Arts/Media Subcommittee. A working party was formed with a smoking cessation expert, Aboriginal project officers and a media expert to develop a brief and tender process to find a suitable producer.

The content of the DVD was based on consultation with the local Aboriginal community and stakeholders as recommended by Brady’s report Vaccinating with Videos and evidence from previous research. Script development was a collaborative process between the producer and the medical director, with feedback from Aboriginal community representatives. Salient anti-tobacco and cessation messages were designed to be positive, reinforcing and build efficacy. A range of trusted community members, Elders, Indigenous role models, ex-smoking mentors and experts presented the messages. Animated sections were included for visual impact: to entertain, educate and change the pace. The narratives of people’s own stories and community dialogues were unscripted, allowing for spontaneity and a documentary feel. The DVD contains an extra feature for maternal smokers.

Filming occurred over a two-week period with strong input from Aboriginal community members across the mid-north coast. The DVD was pre-tested with a convenience sample of nineteen community and health professionals. The survey instrument was adapted from a questionnaire used to measure Indigenous responses to TV anti-smoking advertisements.

Results: The DVD was highly rated on scales measuring believability, acceptability, relevance, cultural suitability and effectiveness. The DVD was launched in December 2011 and distributed across the north coast of NSW through Aboriginal Medical Services and community organisations, and a dedicated website. The website received 300 000 hits in the first six months of it going live. The DVD has received favourable reviews from both professionals and community members across Australia.

Conclusion: Blow Away the Smokes is a unique and effective health promotion product, which has been developed cooperatively with the local Aboriginal community and is suitable for rural and regional smokers to educate, inform, inspire and support smokers to quit.