

Our journey preparing a protocol to collect Aboriginal people's stories of diabetes care

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The possibility for research to better meet the needs of people living in rural and remote places is not just a nice idea, it is a necessary practice as governments, organisations and individuals strive to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

We would like to inspire others to challenge 'scientific' research practices to undertake research that gives Aboriginal people an authentic voice.

We will share our story of developing a research protocol for a study where we have collected Aboriginal people's stories of diabetes care. This is a collaborative story between an Aboriginal Medical Service, a state health service and a Medicare Local told by four Aboriginal Health Workers and a non-Aboriginal researcher.

We will share aspects of our qualitative study design which we believe value Aboriginal people and invites their participation in research. Our presentation will include discussion of coercion and the consent process and an explanation of how we resolved this. We will demonstrate a method of data collection using conversation cards and a conversation map to facilitate discussion in focus groups and we will describe how we valued the expertise of Aboriginal Health Workers in all aspects of our research.

Imposing 'scientific' research designs and practices on Aboriginal people and communities without consideration that each community is unique has the potential to cause further harm and disempowerment. In sharing how we have approached our research, we encourage others to challenge methodological norms to come up with new research methods with their community to allow the unique voice of their community to be heard, and listened to. The possibility of more powerful research is exciting and will bring better understanding of the factors that impact on the health and wellbeing of people in rural and remote places.