

## The health behaviours of rural SA men's shed participants

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### Introduction

Participants of Australian men's sheds are said to exhibit some of the characteristics that correspond with the profile of males generally at higher risk of adverse health outcomes. These groups include older, retired, blue collar, rural men including those from lower socioeconomic groups with generally lower levels of educational attainment. Males with these characteristics tend to be less engaged with the health system and difficult to engage in illness prevention and health promotion interventions, which aim to mitigate the risks associated with chronic disease. Men's Sheds may offer a potential vehicle for the introduction of health promotion activities that improve health knowledge and health behaviours aimed at reducing complications associated with chronic disease. However, for these types of activities to be effective it is important to better understand the health status, health concerns, health knowledge and health seeking behaviours of the men who attend men's sheds and of the preferred formats for receiving health related information. The aim of the project was to determine the health status, health concerns, health knowledge and health seeking behaviour of participants of rural SA men's sheds as a prelude to the design of health promotion activities for men in SA sheds.

### Method

A cross sectional, quantitative, exploratory study design was used with data collected using a self-administered paper based survey across 11 of 25 rural South Australian Men's Sheds.

### Results

154 surveys were returned, identifying a mostly older, retired, lesser educated population. There was a high incidence of obesity and chronic disease, most commonly Type 2 diabetes, depression and cancer. Physical health was the category rated most highly as a concern with the prostate and the heart being the topics for which information was most commonly requested. A significant proportion of participants were interested in information about psychological health suggesting that incidence of mental health concerns was higher than reported. Participants were likely to have seen a GP or other health professional in the previous 12 months, mostly for preventative checks, pain or functional disability. Overall knowledge regarding the prostate, reproductive health and psychological health was limited. Participant preferred method of health information delivery was through hands-on, practical approaches.

### Conclusion

Men in rural SA sheds appear older than described in previous studies and a greater proportion described lower educational attainment. The key health issues identified by men in SA sheds were age-related chronic conditions, followed closely by preventative chronic conditions including obesity and Type 2 diabetes. Despite the high incidence of chronic disease within the population, self-reported health status remained high. The key knowledge deficits in this study were in the areas of reproductive and psychological health. The priorities for the content of health promotion programs arising from this study include the prostate gland, diet and disease and psychological health in rural areas. Men in rural SA sheds prefer to receive health information face-to-face, using hands on approaches. Future work arising from this study will be to develop and pilot materials to men's sheds within the region, particularly in relation to priority topics identified and to develop exemplar formats of materials for programs. Thereafter, and informed by the above, a more comprehensive suite of health promotion materials that involve a practical delivery mode be prepared and piloted as a prelude to a broader experimental study examining the impact of these materials and programs on health knowledge and health behaviours for participants of SA sheds and beyond.

## Presenter

**Miss Chloe Oosterbroek** is a Health Sciences Graduate who majored in psychology and who also successfully completed an Honours degree investigating the health status, health knowledge and health seeking behaviour of men in rural SA men's sheds. Chloe is currently a research assistant at the UniSA, University Department of Rural Health with research focusing on male health, psychological health, health promotion and men's sheds. She has had an active role in the development of the Whyalla Men's Shed both as a shed member and as Secretary to the Management Committee.