Epilepsy and Indigenous Australians

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After much consultation and co-operation of members of the Aboriginal community, Epilepsy ACT and the national body, Epilepsy Australia Ltd have developed an exciting new initiative of easy reading material to assist the Indigenous population to obtain a clearer understanding of the disorder and to recognise the different seizure activity types.

The booklet was formulated by Gordon Coleman of Epilepsy ACT, who is the first Indigenous field worker to be employed by any of the Australian non-profit epilepsy organisations. He adapted text from an Epilepsy Queensland program to suit the targeted readers, with the illustrations being created and donated by Gordon’s nephew Kargun Fogarty of Queensland. A team of medical advisors associated with Epilepsy ACT was consulted regarding the accuracy of the content. Pfizer Foundation, Medicines Australia and Screenmakers Pty Ltd assisted in producing the material.

The booklet “Epilepsy within Indigenous Australians”, which particularly suits the Indigenous population of NSW, ACT and parts of Queensland, was officially launched at Parliament House, Canberra in August 2002 by the Commonwealth Minister of Health and Ageing, Senator, The Hon Kay Patterson.

Since that time it has been distributed throughout Australia by the Epilepsy organisations affiliated with the national body Epilepsy Australia. These include public hospitals, Aboriginal hostels and Indigenous community health services nationally. It has been widely accepted by teenagers with epilepsy and/or learning about the disorder.

As described in the booklet, the symbols and animals depict — what is epilepsy, seizure types, sensations, triggers and what to do to assist as a bystander.