

IMPROVING YOUNG PEOPLE'S SEXUAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE IN RURAL AND REMOTE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

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Introduction:

In 2010, the Council of Australian Governments sought to improve the sexual and reproductive health outcomes of young South Australian (SA) Aboriginal people through education. Many of SA's Aboriginal people live in rural and remote areas with poor access to health, education, employment and welfare services resulting in the poorest sexual and reproductive health outcomes of any cultural group in Australia.

Methods:

Effective sexual health education for Aboriginal South Australian young people living in rural and remote areas needs to take into account the context in which it is to be delivered. It needs to be culturally appropriated, relevant to the lives and situations of young people and have a multifaceted approach which is guided by the communities in which they live.

Building the capacity of educators to deliver sexual health education is critical for sustainability. In rural and remote communities the educators often include contract workers and local community-based workers, but most importantly the community itself. "Yarning On", has evolved over a 6 year time span and has worked with rural and remote Aboriginal communities and agencies to develop a culturally appropriate education program and build the capacity of educators to address the knowledge gaps to reduce teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STI) and sexual violence.

Results:

With a focus on both school and community education, the program developed approaches relevant to the context of both young people's lives and those of the community. Aboriginal-specific resources developed in consultation with community, support educational approaches to both school and community education.

Conclusion:

Evaluation found the program successful in meeting its short term goals. There is a reduction in teenage pregnancy and an increase in STI testing and in the diagnosis of positive STIs. Anecdotal evidence indicates that some communities are more willing to take a 'stand' against violence.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.