

Title: The needs of GPs and GP Registrars working in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander health

Authors: Elizabeth Death, Jenny Reath & Pauline Curtis

What is this publication?

This document reports on a comprehensive assessment of the support and training needs of GPs and GP registrars working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. The needs assessment was conducted by the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Projects managed by the National Rural Faculty of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, with funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.

This national assessment, the first of its kind, was a collaborative activity involving the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and NACCHO state affiliates, The Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine, the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association and the General Practice Registrars Association.

Aim

The needs assessment aimed to identify:

- the ongoing education and support needs of GPs working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health
- the training and support needs of GP registrars interested in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and
- strategies which, if implemented, would improve recruitment and retention of GPs and GP registrars working in this area.

Outcomes

The results of this needs assessment and recommendations from this study will:

- inform providers of General Practice vocational training including General Practice Education and Training (GPET) and the regional training providers, regarding effective and appropriate strategies in the delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health training
- inform all providers of health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities about strategies to recruit and retain General Practitioners.

Process

This exploration of support and training needs involved:

1. Mail surveys to 1190 GPs, GP registrars and GP supervisors from all states and territories
2. Telephone interviews with representatives from the following organisations:
 - Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services
 - Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
 - Australian Indigenous Doctors Association
 - National Rural Health Alliance

- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, Rural Faculty
- Royal Flying Doctor Service
- Rural Workforce Agencies
- State Based organisations of Divisions of General Practice.

3. Documentation review

Results

The support and training needs of GPs working in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander health have been identified as including:

- Networking opportunities for GPs and others working in this area including regional and national meetings, teleconferences and web-based communication
- Workplace strategies including better resourcing for ACCHSs, general practice and cultural mentors and improved remuneration
- Cross cultural training including workshops, Aboriginal mentors, visits to Aboriginal organisations and language training
- Access to relevant clinical information through workshops, CME activities, small groups and case studies
- Enhanced resources and improved access to these
- Development of career pathways including postgraduate qualifications.

The support and training needs for General Practice Registrars working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health have been identified as including:

- Training in Aboriginal health for all registrars and a "special interest training stream" available for those with a particular interest
- Experience in adequately resourced and supported Aboriginal health training posts
- Cross cultural training and orientation before placement in Aboriginal health posts including workshops, camps, visits to Aboriginal community organisations and language training
- Expansion of mentoring programs including experienced GPs and cross cultural mentors
- Enhanced resources and improved access to these
- Access to relevant clinical information through workshops, small groups and case studies, internet discussion groups
- Updated Aboriginal health Training Curriculum.

For more information or a copy of this report, please contact:

Dr Jenny Reath, GP Manager of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Projects on jenny.reath@racgp.org.au or 02 4753 6727

Pauline Curtis, Project Officer on pauline.curtis@racgp.org.au or 08 8267 8351.