

## **Making it happen: linkages between students and health workers create great nutrition resources**

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### **A story**

Strong links between Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service (GRAMS), Curtin University of Technology, Combined University Centre for Rural Health (CUCRH) and the Midwest GP Network (MGPN) has enhanced the capacity in the region to support postgraduate dietetic students undertaking community placements. This is the story of the development of nutrition resources and positive outcomes of these linkages.

Appointment by Curtin University of a non-government dietitian to supervise dietetic students' placements used established networks to broaden the scope of the placement. The dietitian employed by the MGPN to provide nutrition services to the local GRAMS, Curtin University and supported by CUCRH, provided invaluable opportunities for students to work with Indigenous people.

Dietetic students bring the ability to provide accurate resources for nutrition education, and have the luxury of time to develop resources identified by GRAMS. GRAMS brings cultural security and Indigenous knowledge to make resources culturally appropriate, focused on identified nutrition issues, and Aboriginal health workers to deliver nutrition messages on a permanent basis. Using 'train the trainer' approach students developed resources, trained health workers to deliver nutrition messages, and empowered them as experts in Indigenous health.

Cultural competency gained by working with Indigenous health workers was vital to students' training, and promoted a culture of respect and cooperation with Indigenous health workers. Cultural barriers, prejudices and stereotypes were crushed for students, many who had not left the security of the city, or interacted with Indigenous people.

Resources eventuated and great ideas and dreams of the health workers became a reality. With these resources specifically targeting local needs and having local content, there has been ownership. Resource topics include antenatal nutrition, diabetes and women's health screening series.

Students meet competencies required for entry level dietitians while completing the development cycle. Getting the job done has now become a 'work in progress' and a success story.