The ‘Communicate’ Study: Improving communication with hospitalised Aboriginal patients to ensure quality & safety in healthcare

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Background

- Over 54% of Royal Darwin Hospital (RDH) patients identify as Australian Aboriginal.
- Cultural safety
- Despite these statistics, over 60% speak an Aboriginal language at home1.
- Over 90% of healthcare providers at RDH are non-Indigenous. Many are from southern parts of Australia or overseas. They are unfamiliar with the unique local cultural environment.
- Cultural competency component is missing the mark…The institutional racism that exists is actually not addressed and this in my view underpins all service provision.
- Intercultural communication is a leading knowledge-practice gap nationally4,5 and internationally6.

So what?

- Inadequate intercultural communication is a leading knowledge-practice gap nationally4,5 and internationally6.
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- Aims

To improve patient-provider intercultural communication at RDH and consequently Aboriginal patient health outcomes, measured using qualitative and quantitative data.

Communicate stage 1

Identified barriers to achieving effective communication

- Access to interpreters
  - RDH do not employ on site interpreters.
  - 31% of staff lacked confidence in determining who requires an interpreter.
- Cultural Awareness Training
  - Training is mandatory however 18% of staff had not received training.
  - 29.7% of staff were not satisfied with training received.
- Deeply committed to culturally appropriate care
  - Clinical, non clinical staff and hospital management recognise quality intercultural communication is a core component of culture security.

Communicate stage 2

Intervention underway

- In partnership with the hospital, a hospital-based AIS coordinator has been employed to improve Interpreter access.
- Evaluation underway includes impact on numbers of interpreter bookings, uptake of new audio-visual interpreting option and impact on patient experience and outcomes.
- Clinical champions
  - Hospital-based doctors promoting the use of interpreters and best practice in intercultural communication.
  - Measure effect of clinical championing through AIS booking data reviews and clinician interviews.
- Cultural safety
  - A PhD project is addressing staff concerns around cultural awareness training. Research has found such training can reinforce negative stereotypes.
  - Effective and sustainable training in cultural safety may improve patient care. Cultural safety prioritises the patient’s perspective over hospital culture.

Research Translation Goal

- To create a series of cultural safety training modules which will assist hospital-based doctors in their delivery of care to Aboriginal patients at RDH.
- To improve patient safety and experience by embedding systems changes to allow healthcare providers to integrate use of Aboriginal interpreters into delivery of care.

References