

Dear colleagues, collaborators and friends,

It's great to see that the momentum of the Communicate Study Partnership continues to grow. Major announcements in this newsletter include the First Nations Health Communication Symposium (August 21st), and that we have new team members!

There is still time to register to attend the *First Nations Health Communication Symposium*, taking place in Darwin, Alice Springs, and online on August 21st. *With the theme* Stories that matter: reflecting and collaborating for change, the event promises rich discussions and shared learning across regions, roles, and disciplines. We're delighted to share that Carol Christopherson is the keynote speaker this year. We'd love to see you there - you'll find registration details below.

We're delighted to welcome four new team members who bring a wealth of experience and passion to our work: Mario Faggion (Senior Educator and Training Facilitator), Beatriz Cardona (Qualitative Researcher), Gisela Malimara (Research Assistant), and Harshana Chathurangi (Biostatistician). Their expertise across intercultural practice, research, and data analysis will further strengthen our efforts to improve healthcare experiences for First Nations peoples. We're also on the lookout for a First Nations Research Officer to support our growing program of work – please spread the word if you know someone who might be a great fit.

Read on to hear about recent training sessions and presentations our team has run, aiming to improve intercultural communication in healthcare to contribute to closing the gap for First Nations people.

Warm regards,
Professor Anna Ralph

Program lead, Communicate Study Partnership





Pictured (L-R): Shaunelle Lalara, Trish Paterson, Tris Djambalulu, and Elah Yunupingu delivering on their perspectives

Our team has been busy delivering a range of training to health care professionals to support integration of culturally safe communication in their practice.

On 11th June, Communicate Study staff in collaboration with Sam Brennan Psychology and the Stay Strong Program at Menzies, led by Josie Povey, delivered training to staff working in roles across NT Health's Top End Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs services. In the half-day workshop participants delved into the key concepts of cultural safety and critical reflection, and explored practical communication skills and tools tailored to their professional background and roles – for example the AIMhi Stay Strong Care Plan and Gundirr. The workshop included a Q and A session with Communicating for Safety Interpreters who generously offered their insights and practical recommendations.

2025 Northern Territory Anaesthesia Continuing Education Conference

On June 21st, the team also delivered a workshop at the 2025 NT ACE Conference (2025 Northern Territory Anaesthesia Continuing Education Conference, "Staying Cool Under Heat"). This conference brought together anaesthetists from across Australia to focus on practical and evidence-based strategies to manage clinical risk, uncertainty, and pressure within the field of anaesthesia. The workshop highlighted the importance of culturally safe communication in high-pressure clinical environments. Drawing on real-life examples and interactive activities, the team explored communication techniques and challenges First Nations peoples face when accessing care in hospital settings. Participants were also invited to reflect on their own communication styles, consider the impact of the hospital system, and build awareness.



Pictured (L-R): Elah Yunupingu, Tiana Alley and Jo Sweeney

Gove District Hospital update

Nicole Nobbs and Rarrtjiwuy Melanie Herdman delivered the first two of six Intercultural Communication modules – *Cultural Safety* on 28th April and *Communicating with Patients and Families* on 23rd June. Both sessions had a fantastic turnout, with 20 staff attending, including doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers – a strong show of enthusiasm for strengthening communication across the hospital.

Nicole has been focusing on the *Interpreter Use at Gove District Hospital 2025 Review and Recommendations Report*, to build the case for employing dedicated hospital-based interpreters here at Gove.



Pictured (L-R): Nicole Nobbs and Rarrtjiwuy Melanie Herdman delivering training

4th International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Lowitja Conference



Pictured: Tiana Alley with her poster presentation at the Lowitja Conference.



Pictured (L-R): Maddison Sims and Gloria Balvia hosting Menzies School of Health Research booth

Tiana and Maddison recently attended the 2025 Lowitja International Indigenous Health and Wellbeing Conference on Kaurana Country in Adelaide. This year marked the fourth international gathering hosted by the Lowitja Institute, with the theme Strong, Fearless, Together, a tribute to the legacy of the late Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG, the Institute's co-patron and namesake.

Tiana presented a poster highlighting First Nations peoples' stories and solutions to intercultural communication challenges in healthcare. Her presentation was based on our 2024 publication in the *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, "*If They Help Us, We Can Help Them*": *First Nations Peoples Identify Intercultural Health Communication Problems and Solutions in Hospital in Northern Australia*. Maddison also represented Menzies in conversations with people from across the country at the Menzies booth, sharing and celebrating the impactful work Menzies is doing throughout Australia.



Pictured (L-R): Christine Sanderson (Online), Kelly Clark, and Tiana Alley presenting at our National Palliative Care Week Event

As part of National Palliative Care Week, the Communicate Study Partnership hosted a hybrid seminar: Navigating Culturally Safe End-of-Life Care – Insights from the Ask the Specialist Podcast.

The session featured powerful audio snippets from the podcast's three episodes on end-of-life care, centred on the questions listed below. These were followed by reflections from co-hosts Dr Christine Sanderson and Kelly Clarke, who shared personal insights and responded to questions from attendees. This important discussion helped deepen understanding of culturally safe approaches to palliative care and highlighted the value of listening and learning from First Nations voices.

- *How does sorry business work? What does it mean?*
- *What should I call a deceased person if saying their name isn't appropriate?*
- *Is it better to say "death" or "passed away"?*
- *What are the roles and responsibilities tied to skin and kin relationships?*

40th anniversary events

As part of Menzies' 40th anniversary celebrations, the Communicate Study was proud to host a stall at both the Open Day and Gala events. We showcased the *Ask the Specialist* podcast - sharing the story behind its creation, how it was developed in partnership with Specialists, and the impact it's having on healthcare workers across the NT.

Various podcast resources, including powerful quotes from the Specialists, sparked rich conversations with Menzies staff, partner organisations, and community members. It was a valuable opportunity to reflect on the importance of culturally safe communication and to highlight *Ask the Specialist* as a key, innovative resource developed by Menzies to support better healthcare for First Nations peoples.

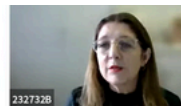


Pictured (L-R): Tiana Alley, Anna Lucas and Maddison Sims

Cultural Lens



- The way your personal cultural background, experiences, beliefs, and values shape how you perceive and interpret the world around you.
- It influences your understanding of behaviours, practices, and interactions, often subconsciously.



Pictured: Dr. Shirley McGough presenting on June 3rd 2025 on the topic of: "Championing cultural safety in health care and why it matters: A western White woman's perspective"

Since our last newsletter, we've been fortunate to welcome a broad range of speakers from across Australia, including Dr. Christopher Mayes, Dr. Shirley McGough, Dr Terry Ngarritjan Kessarar, and the Royal Darwin Hospital Communicating for Safety Interpreters. Each presented on their topic of expertise such as Whiteness and power in healthcare, the ethics of cultural safety, the role of non-Indigenous people in culturally safe practice, White social practices and the maintenance of hegemony, and practical strategies for working effectively with First Nations interpreters.

Email us if you would like to be sent a calendar invite for future seminars. You can also find our Cultural Safety Champions seminars on the Menzies YouTube Channel:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLzN0H6PIQL2-J2AAFkrL0-oyzC3m9Bo_p

Staff news - Welcome to Mario Faggion, Beatriz Cardona, and Harshana Mungasinghe!



Mario has joined the team as the Senior Educator and Training Facilitator. A note from Mario: I was born and grew up in the Top End and have lived and worked in many different places with many different people. Along the way I became conversational in Anindilyakwa and a couple of Yolŋu languages as well. Through that journey of traversing cultural boundaries and learning these languages I had to develop a really effective intercultural practice. I then learnt about the conceptual framework of intercultural communication at an academic level through my undergraduate degree at CDU. The combination of these two experiences led me to become annoyingly passionate about intercultural communication and its importance within the cultural maelstrom that we all find ourselves in today. I'm super excited to join the Communicate Study team at Menzies and continue to build on the great work that has already been done.



Dr Beatriz Cardona has joined the team as our Senior Research Fellow. Dr. Cardona is a cultural researcher with more than 10 years' experience in qualitative research methods and health program evaluation. She was a leading researcher on a project to measure outcomes of community care programs. She has worked as a researcher and lecturer at Macquarie University and Western Sydney University and has written various papers on issues around cultural diversity, equity and health outcomes for diverse communities.



Harshana is leading the quantitative analysis for the Communicate Study, evaluating the impact of the study's activities through rigorous statistical methods. Harshana is a biostatistician with a sustained track record in academia. She holds a BSc (First Class Honours) in Statistics from the University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka, and began her academic career as a full-time tutor at the School of Statistics. Harshana is currently completing her PhD in Medical Statistics, jointly undertaken at the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, and University College London (UCL), UK. Her academic and research interests are in epidemiology, biostatistics, and public health, with a particular focus on diabetes and non-communicable disease epidemiology. She is passionate about applying advanced statistical methodologies to address pressing public health challenges.

Maddison, the NT representative for AANZCA, the Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand Communication Association, recently hosted a virtual networking event for those working in the communications space. Participants joined from across the NT, including Darwin and East Arnhem, to learn more about the association and share their current research.

The event featured a lively 3-Minute Thesis competition, with a bursary on offer to attend the 2025 AANZCA international conference on the Sunshine Coast. While all the entries were engaging and thought-provoking, Tiana Alley took first place with her presentation on patient stories and solutions to intercultural barriers in healthcare.

If you're interested in joining future networking events, get in touch with Maddison at maddison.sims@menzies.edu.au.

Upcoming event



First Nations Health Communication Symposium



Stories that matter: reflecting and collaborating for change



21 August 2025

Register today!

The First Nations Health Communication Symposium is just around the corner and shaping up to be a great event yet again.

The theme for this year's symposium is 'Stories that matter: reflecting and collaborating for change', with keynote address by Carol Christophersen.

Join in Darwin, Alice Springs or online to hear from First Nations leaders, health professionals, researchers, interpreters and community advocates and explore topics such as communication in Central Australia, clinically and culturally safe conversations, language and meaning, cultural safety health education.

Don't forget to register to attend, mark August 21st in your diaries, and spread the word through your networks. We'd love to see you there!

Publications

"If They Help Us, We Can Help Them": First Nations Peoples Identify Intercultural Health Communication Problems and Solutions in Hospital in Northern Australia | Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities

Defining narrative change: a case study of the decolonising podcast Ask the Specialist: Larrakia, Tiwi and Yolŋu stories to inspire better healthcare (tandfonline.com)

Evaluating the impact of 'Ask the Specialist Plus': a training program for improving cultural safety and communication in hospital-based healthcare | BMC Health Services Research | Full Text (biomedcentral.com)

Improving outcomes for hospitalised First Nations peoples through greater cultural safety and better communication: the Communicate Study Partnership study protocol | Implementation Science | Full Text (biomedcentral.com)

Does improved interpreter uptake reduce self-discharge rates in hospitalized patients? A successful hospital intervention explained – PubMed (nih.gov)

"The talking bit of medicine, that's the most important bit": doctors and Aboriginal interpreters collaborate to transform culturally competent hospital care – PubMed (nih.gov)

From "stuck" to satisfied: Aboriginal people's experience of culturally safe care with interpreters in a Northern Territory hospital – PubMed (nih.gov)

Aboriginal patient and interpreter perspectives on the delivery of culturally safe hospital-based care – PubMed (nih.gov)

Improving communication with Aboriginal hospital inpatients: a quasi-experimental interventional study – PubMed (nih.gov)

"How can I do more?" Cultural awareness training for hospital-based healthcare providers working with high Aboriginal caseload – PubMed (nih.gov)

Low uptake of Aboriginal interpreters in healthcare: exploration of current use in Australia's Northern Territory – PubMed (nih.gov)

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