

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

I would like to respectfully acknowledge the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Owners of the land on which this conference is held



Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Perspectives of Childhood Respiratory Illness

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Background

- Australian Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children bear a disproportionate burden of acute & chronic lower respiratory infections (RI)
- Despite this there have been no previous studies that have examined risk for, & impact of, RI in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children from a cultural & family perspective

Aims

- This study aimed to inform the development of future research & interventions by gaining an understanding of perceptions of risk for RI in Indigenous children
- To examine the cultural context, risk factors & impact of acute & chronic RI on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children & their families in an urban setting

Objectives

Primary objective:

- To explore risk for RI as perceived by the parents of young Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children from a cultural perspective

Secondary objective:

- To explore the impact of RI in urban Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children on their families from within a cultural context

Methodology

- Study employed a qualitative approach utilising culturally safe research methodology
- Focus groups were conducted with members of Brisbane's Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander community in order to access the lived experiences of parents & carers of children with RI

Results

- A total of four focus groups were conducted, with 24 participants
- All participants stated that they (a) identified with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait community and (b) actively maintained connections with their culture at home
- The majority of participants also stated that they preferred to access health care that met their cultural needs



Results

In summary, participants' perceptions of risk & impact were influenced by:

- Traditional values, culture & practices, including traditional medicine
- Beliefs handed down from Elders, parents & other family members about illness & wellness
- Experiences within health services
- Connections to friends, family & community
- Access to medical information
- Social, emotional & spiritual wellbeing

Discussion

- The perceptions of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander parents & carers can affect (a) how their family experiences health care at both the primary & tertiary level (b) how they manage the illness of their child
- These, in turn, can potentially influence the health outcomes for their child
- Medical professionals need to hear the voices of parents & carers: to take their perceptions seriously & address their concerns
- ...not only to begin to address the prevalence of RI in Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children but also
- the larger health disparity

Translating Research into Practice

- 2015 – 2016 project gathered feedback from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander families about their experiences at the new Lady Cilento Children's Hospital
- Results found that families wanted staff improvement in: communication skills, empathy & cultural competence
- Findings used to devise a new intervention tool to improve communication between ward staff & Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander families



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